The Telengana Movement

1944-51

Barry Pavier

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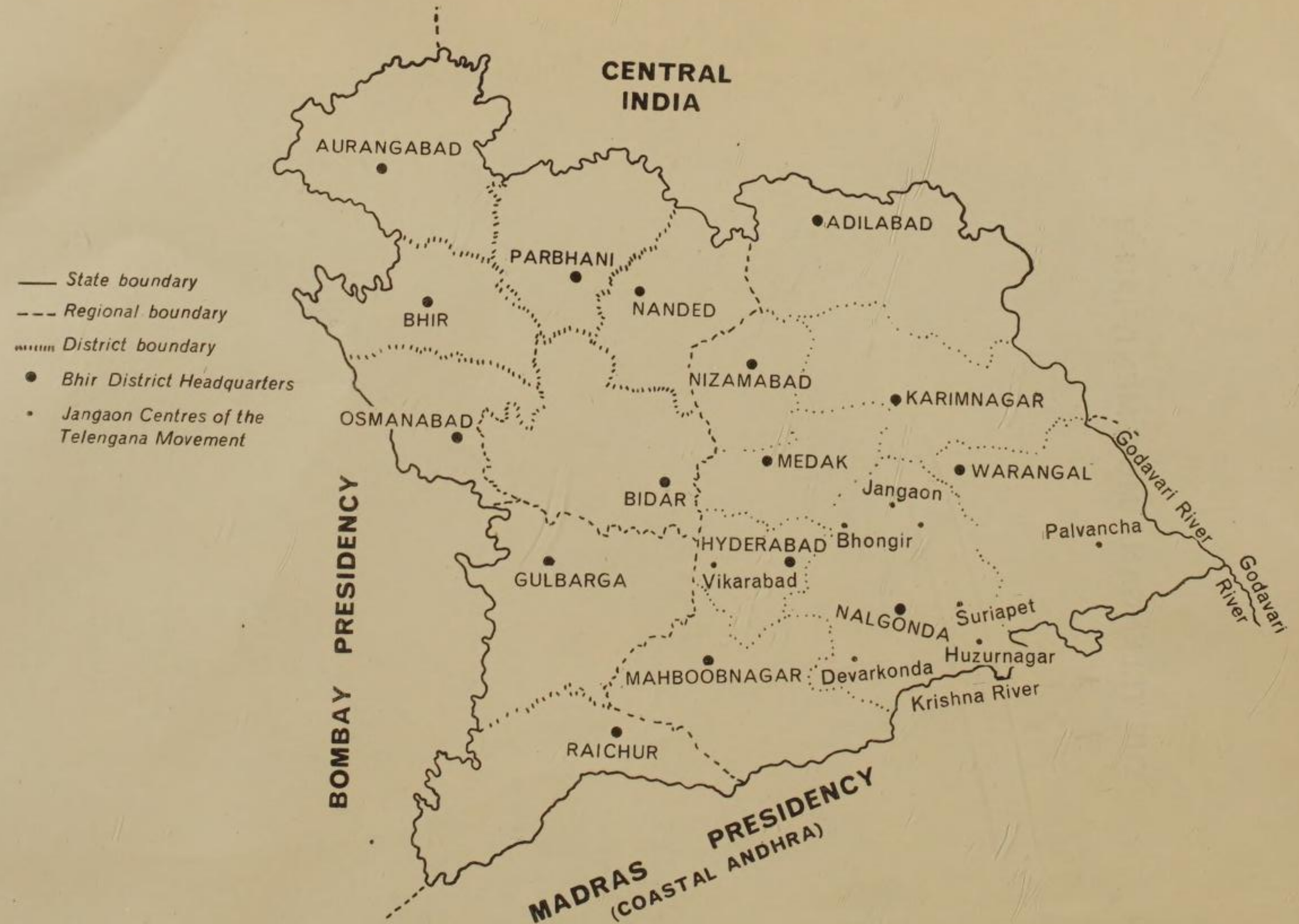
THE TELENGANA MOVEMENT, 1944-51


CENTRAL INDIA
AURANGABAD
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HYDERABAD
Bhongir
GULBARGA
Vikarabad
NALGONDA
Suriapet
Huzurnagar
MAHBOOBNAGAR
Devarkonda
Krishna River
RAICHUR
Godavari River
Godavari River
BOMBAY PRESIDENCY
MADRAS PRESIDENCY
(COASTAL ANDHRA)
State boundary
Regional boundary
District boundary
Bhir District Headquarters
Jangaon Centres of the Telengana Movement

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1944-51

Barry Pavier

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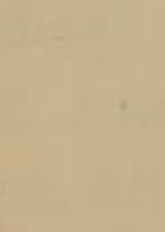

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Preface

This book has had an unusual history. It started life as a D. Phil. project for the University of Sussex and it was during that period that I spent a year, 1973-74, researching in India, thanks to a grant from the Social Science Research Council. It was never written as a thesis as I found myself unable to deal with the unspoken demands on research students in this field to make some kind of definitive statement on the major debates in their theses. This asks rather too much of people engaged in producing what is after all only their first monograph. Many academics of position if not repute go through their entire careers without attempting any such definitive statement and I found the demands seriously inhibited my ability to come to terms with the topic on a less elevated basis.

So for two years I gave up working on the project. However, in the autumn of 1976, after I had left the university, Terry Byres, of the Centre of International and Area Studies, University of London, asked me to present a paper to the Peasant Seminar at the Centre. It was actually a bad paper, but preparing it gave me an indication of how I might overcome the difficulties that had previously defeated me. With more limited objectives than the grandiose 'seminal work' of the academic imagination, the structure of the work fell fairly easily into place, although the actual writing was interrupted by employment problems and the first draft was not completed until early 1979. After another visit to India in the summer of that year a second draft was written, taking into account the comments of a number of people who had read the first draft.

But all this does not explain *why* I wrote the book. Initially I was drawn towards the Telengana movement because it seemed strange that such an important event, acknowledged as such by all those who write on peasant movements and by the Indian left, should have such a small literature. Here I should perhaps declare my interest. This is not an 'objective', neutral work, as understood in orthodox academic terms. As a revolutionary socialist and member of the Socialist Workers Party I unconditionally identify with the self-activity of workers and peasants. Therefore I take it as understood that international capitalism exploits and oppresses workers

and peasants and so the Telengana movement does not have to be 'justified'. As an authentic movement of workers and peasants to control their own lives it justifies itself.

This explains why much of the second half of the book is taken up with analysing the politics of the movement and of the Communist Party. For the basic political issues which were involved in the failure of the movement lie in the politics of the CPI. Indeed, these questions are still of over-riding importance today, as all three wings of Indian communism are still engaged in agrarian movements and would seem to me to have hardly changed their basic politics since 1951.

If any Indian socialist feels that this is just one more instance of a European socialist pontificating to the excolonials, I can say that I have only two qualifications for making a critique: unconditional support for workers and peasants movements and my own participation in the socialist movement.

Many people assisted and gave support in the writing of this book. They include Ranajit Guha, my supervisor at Sussex, Peter Reeves, John Goodman, Ian Duncan, A. K. Dasgupta, Librarian of the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad, S.V.K. Prasad, D.V. Rao, Professor Bipan Chandra and Shri Prakash, both of whom read the manuscript and made valuable comments, and my comrades in the Socialist Workers Party who gave me the politics with which I found I could understand what really happened. Not least I need to thank Laura Turner, who gave me confidence in myself to carry the project through.

Introduction

Like Gaul, the Hyderabad State was divided into three parts. These three regions were Marathwada (six districts), Telengana (nine districts), and Karnataka (two districts). These divisions were determined by the linguistic divisions of the state (into Marathi, Telugu, and Kannada respectively). These regions are now part of the linguistic states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka.

The old princely state occupied an area of 82,698 square miles right in the middle of British India, bordering the provinces of Bombay, Madras, and Central India [Imperial Gazetteer 1909:1]. It sat on top of the Deccan Plateau at an average height of 1,500 ft. The Marathwada region is marked by Trappean rocks and black cotton soil, leading in the Nineteenth Century to the growth of wheat and cotton cultivation, while in Telengana the granite rocks are sparsely covered with sandy soils, which produced the construction of water tanks and rice cultivation on the one hand, and the cultivation of various forms of millet on the other [Imperial Gazetteer 1909:2].

The state was cobbled together in the Eighteenth Century by a local governor of the collapsing Mughal Empire, but after the first twenty years of its existence the dynasty (the Asaf Jahis) were renowned for their unswerving subservience to the British, firstly during their conquest of India and latterly during their attempts to hold on to it. In reward for this they not only survived but in fact gained at the expense of their neighbours who had the unfortunate desire to preserve their independence [Imperial Gazetteer 1909:15-17]. Not that this prevented the British from installing a political agent in Hyderabad City who exercised as much control as his counterpart in any other princely state. Neither did it prevent the Viceroy from rapping the ruler (the Nizam) over the knuckles in 1926 when the latter attempted to claim equal status with the British Crown [Indian States Committee 1929:18]. What it did mean was that the Hyderabad State not only retained its size but also its own ruling class, while in the rest of India the indigenous ruling class was systematically uprooted by the British.

This ruling class was based on the *jagirdari* system of the Mughal

Empire, which survived in Hyderabad along with the class itself. *Jagirs* were grants of the right to collect land revenue from a number of villages, given to nobles and other leading servants of the ruling dynasty. Although they were supposed to be transferable, they soon became hereditary and in time the *jagirdars* began to assume proprietory rights which were completely alien to the original concept of the *jagir* [Khusro 1958:18]. In 1949 *jagirs* accounted for 35.7% of the land area of the state. 34% of the villages, and 29.4% of the population [Khusro 1958:2]. The largest consisted of 401 villages and they ranged down to a number of single village *jagirs*. Their administration was almost uniformly inefficient, due both to the nature of the *jagirdars* as absentee landlords and also to the scattered nature of the *jagirs*, which meant that bits of the same jagir were often hundreds of miles apart [Khusro 1958:10-11].

Their position as absentee landlords, however, meant that they lost their pivotal position in the countryside to another landlord group, the *deshmukhs* (see Chapter One). The *deshmukhs* were an integral part of the rural economy, rather than an urban noble class drawing its consumption needs from landed estates. In general, the initiative in rural areas passed to them in the Twentieth Century, and they became the main rural base of the ruling class. The *jagirdars* could be swept away in post-independence land reforms with hardly a whimper, while most of the *deshmukhs* survived to prosper under the new regime.

In 1947 this relic of the Eighteenth Century, rather than follow almost every other princely state and more or less gracefully liquidate itself into the Indian Union, attempted a U.D.I. (Unilateral Declaration of Independence). The driving force behind this astonishing move was an alliance between the old ruling class and an extreme Muslim chauvinist party, the *Ittehad-ul-Muslimin*. Fatally hampered by the fact that the Muslims comprised only 12.8% of the population [Census of India 1941:219] and that Hyderabad was landlocked, the regime survived a feeble nationalist agitation until India had managed to stabilize its border with Pakistan. Then in September 1948 the Indian army entered Hyderabad in an operation euphemistically called the Police Action. Within four days the regime had collapsed.

But concurrently with this there had occurred an insurrection in the Telengana region, organised by cadres of the Communist Party

of India. This movement not only managed to expel the landlords from hundreds of villages but also fought the forces of the state and the gangs of the *Ittehad* to a standstill. It was this what has passed into the history of the Indian left as the Telengana Armed Struggle, and this work is an attempt at a history of that movement. But it is first necessary to examine the economic and political conditions which provided the seed-bed for the movement.

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PART ONE

The New Economy

1 The Social Organisation of Telengana

Unlike pre-war China or even pre-war British India, and unlike almost every area of post-war Africa, Asia and Latin America, there were no droves of journalists, political scientists, and every other sort of social scientist trampling all over Telengana. At most there were a few anthropologists getting to know some 'primitive' and marginal hill tribes. The quite extensive official publications of the Nizam's Government were so obsessed with the problem of rural indebtedness that they only manage to give a few brief glimpses of what was actually going on beneath the surface of defaulted Co-operative Department loans. Fortunately we are saved by two sets of local studies carried out in 1928-29 and 1949-50 by the same person and (mercifully) using the same method [Kesava Iyengar 1931 and 1951]. These give us a whole range of information on the size of landholdings, and the incidence and nature of tenancy and indebtedness. Together with another invaluable general economic survey [Qureshi 1947], and some of the official publications, it is then possible to tackle the question of what did actually happen to the political economy of Telengana after World War I, because the nature of the social organisation of the region is then quite sharply defined.

The Deshmukhs

The villages of Telengana were dominated by a particular type of landlord called *deshmukhs*. Their origin lay in the administrative reforms of Salar Jung I, prime minister of the Hyderabad State in the 1860s and 1870s. The reforms included the state assuming the direct collection of land revenue in the government administered areas. Previously the right to collect the land revenue had been auctioned off. The revenue farmers thus dispossessed were given land in compensation. Using the influence accumulated by their position as revenue farmers they proceeded to grab as much of the best land as possible, and in addition were granted a state pension. Having been made a present of the dominant position in the rural economy, they resolutely strengthened themselves during the succeeding decades. It was not possible for them to directly cultivate more

than a few hundred acres of land, even with the aid of *vetti* (forced labour customarily exacted from villagers by large landlords)—and the *deshmukhs* often owned thousands of acres. The result was that most of their land was either let out on tenancy or remained fallow. [For this and the succeeding paragraph most of the material came from the interview with D.V. Rao 1974].

The *deshmukhs* combined moneylending with landlordism, in contrast to the situation in Marathwada, where the moneylenders were predominantly Marwari merchants who took no direct interest in the cultivation of the land and were content, if that is the right word, to sit back and receive rents. The moneylending role of the *deshmukhs* became more important at the end of the nineteenth century with the introduction of the requirement that land revenue must be paid in cash. Hard currency was very scarce in the villages and the main source was the *deshmukhs*. They got most of their currency from the proceeds of the excise contracts which were both extremely lucrative and a *deshmukh* monopoly. Using this array of devices to aggrandise themselves the *deshmukhs* grew fat and prospered. Underneath them a jumbled range of petty merchants, small landlords (*i.e.* those whose holdings were limited to one or two villages, unlike the *deshmukhs*, who had widespread interests), and 'rich' peasants fought for space at the expense of the majority of the population who ended up paying them either money or grain. It was the *deshmukhs* who dominated the scene, however, and it was this that was to have a deciding influence on the policy of the Communist Party of India during the struggles of the 1940s.

The Land Question

In the first decades of this century, however, a superficial view would have shown that the position of peasants in Telengana was not as difficult as that of their counterparts in Marathwada. The local studies of 1928-29 revealed that while in the Aurangabad district of Marathwada 28.9% of the dry (unirrigated) land had changed hands during the previous 25 years [Kesava Iyengar 1931a: 140] in the Warangal district of Telengana the corresponding figure was only 9.1% [Kesava Iyengar 1931a:119]. Over 50% of the transactions in Aurangabad were through debt, which meant that the land had passed into the hands of the Marwari merchants, who tried to ensure that the standard of cultivation (and thus income) was maintained by leaving the previous owner to cultivate the land

[Kesava Iyengar 1931a: 141-2]. The Aurangabad figures were by far the highest in the six districts surveyed, and caused an outbreak of anxiety in the State bureaucracy, who saw their attempts to build up a thrifty enterprising peasantry being constantly threatened (not to say thwarted) by the transfer of land to the 'non-cultivating classes' [Kesava Iyengar 1931a: viii]. The Warangal situation was different because of the much greater importance of wet (irrigated) land.

Wet land was and is crucial in the Telengana rural economy. Possession of it means that you can produce a surplus over your domestic requirements. If you own even a considerable area of purely dry land then you are condemned to a perpetual struggle to keep yourself and your family afloat. 80% of the wet land in Hyderabad was in Telengana and so 24.6% of the wet land in the twelve surveyed villages had changed hands in the preceding 25 years, one third of it by debt transactions [Kesava Iyengar 1931a: 120]. The desire of the *deshmukhs* to get hold of wet land had inflated the price of land in the southern part of the district. In two villages in this area an acre of wet land would sell for up to Rs 400, while in the other villages the price was Rs 100 or less [Kesava Iyengar 1931a:119]. Because wet crops were so much more valuable than those grown on dry land the loss of wet land meant that the *deshmukhs* were becoming even more powerful than they had been to start with.

The situation was one of a vast differentiation in number and size of holdings. The survey conducted some not very precise estimating of an 'economic size' (that is, a holding large enough to support an 'average family') and came up with the figure of fifteen acres of dry land or five acres of wet land [Kesava Iyengar 1931a: 15]. In Warangal in the twelve surveyed villages 806 out of the 980 dry landholdings were less than fifteen acres, while 545 out of the 636 wet landholdings were smaller than five acres. There was one holding of more than 1,500 acres of dry land, and in one instance a *deshmukh* held over 1,000 acres of wet land in a single village [Kesava Iyengar 1931a: 116]. The situation was not as extreme in other districts surveyed: in Nanded 555 out of 1076 holdings had less than the 'economic' area of dry land, in Aurangabad 366 out of 726, and in Raichur 597 out of 979 [Kesava Iyengar 1131a: 15]. While the other districts hardly reveal a picture of idyllic rural life, the situation in Warangal was qualitatively different. Even at this

stage, before the Depression, the *deshmukhs* were building themselves a position of total dominance in the villages where they had interests.

Of all *deshmukhs*, probably the most hated was Visnur Ramchandra Reddy, of Jangaon in Nalgonda district, who owned 40,000 acres in forty villages. He made peasants do forced labour in his fields, extracted *nazrana* (presents in cash or kind) for births, marriages or deaths in his family, and made every artisan and merchant turn over a certain proportion of his products. He had a local court where the only way to get a favourable judgement was a bribe. In this way he built himself a fine house costing Rs 2,00,000 [Sundarayya 1972:16].

He was also not above murder. There was a peasant called Bandagi, who quarrelled with his brothers over the family land. His elder brother Abbas Ali tried to grab all the family land with the aid of Ramchandra Reddy. Normally this support would have been enough to guarantee him success but Bandagi organised the rest of the family to oppose him and actually fought Ramchandra Reddy through the courts. In the general run of things peasants stood no chance when faced with the legal machine, where the *deshmukhs* held all the cards since only they could afford lawyers. In this case, however, Bandagi's tenacity won the day and after several years of litigation he actually won the case. But as he was returning to his village he was set upon and murdered by Ramchandra Reddy's hoodlums. This incident only served to increase popular hatred of the *deshmukh*—the local people erected a shrine where Bandagi fell, where offerings are made to this day [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:38-9].

Here is another case—the village of Ghanapur, where one man, Pingli Kothandarama Reddy, owned 1197 out of the total of 1434 acres of wet land. He had acquired 599 of those acres during the previous fifteen years, either by forced occupation or by debt developed into 'sale'. He had also got hold of the 112 of the 214 acres of dry land [Kesava Iyengar 1931b: 152]. The report continued:

> There is no middle class and the big landowners are de facto not only employers but also sowcars and grocers, judges and magistrates. In the case of the big landholder of this village particularly, the entire economy of the village is organised to his dictation. His vetti (slave) madigas prepare ropes, baskets and

shoes for all his bhagelas and cultivation needs. His agents keep shops and sell provisions and deduct at harvest times out of dues to bhagela A, B or C. His agents lend money and collect interest. His kalals extract and sell toddy to the bhagelas and madigas. In brief, he exercises a good bit of real sovereignty, subordinating every person and every process to the supreme purpose of his maximum net income. [Kesava Iyengar 1931b:161]

This was rather pulling punches. In a letter to B. Abdy Collins, the I.C.S. officer serving as Director-General of Commerce and Industries in the Hyderabad Government, Kesava Iyengar had said:

> In Warangal, I find that the rural economy is dominated by tyrannical, short-sighted landholders oppressing the landless tenant or penniless serf (bhagela). I find that if I should record the truth as such, and incorporate all my data with the Report, it is bound to throw light on the discreditable ways of these big landlords individually. And these, with their influence and sway, would try their best to discredit the Enquiry. [Kesava Iyengar to Collins 12/12/29].

Collins himself found that the *deshmukhs* were frustrating his own efforts to spread the principles of co-operation amongst the peasants of Telengana. In a report to the Finance Minister on the state of affairs in Warangal he wrote:

> I found that the societies were suffering from the fact that large loans had been given to Deshmukhs and prominent raiyats, especially Revenue officials, in nearly every society. These men neither wished to repay their own money nor to allow other members to do so either since it would obviously be a reflection on themselves if other members paid their loan and they did not. They also thought themselves perfectly safe and that by bribing the subordinate officials in the same way as they have done in the past, they would be able to avoid paying up their dues. [Collins letter of 9/5/30].

It would be possible to go on and on piling up derogatory references to the *deshmukhs* by representatives of the regime of which they were an integral part. As has been mentioned before, however,

one of the most important elements of their position was that it was supported by a class of *bhagelas* (agrestic serfs) and on the performance of *vetti* (forced labour).

'Feudal' Exactions

The origin of a *bhagela* was typically that of a landless member of one of the lower castes, often from an untouchable caste, who would be obliged to offer her or his labour as security for debts, and work for the creditor until the debt was repaid. For instance, it often happened that when a man married, involving considerable expense, he would become a *bhagela*, while his wife would work as an agricultural labourer (when she could) and support them both [Qureshi 1947: 72]. The wages for this work would be deducted as repayments for the loan. But wages were so low and interest so high (usually never less than 25%) that the debt remained unpaid. When the *bhagela* died the debt was inherited by his heir, so you had the situation of generations of agricultural labourers giving totally unpaid labour to *deshmukhs*, which enabled them to cultivate their large holdings paying the most minimal amount in wages.

In 1936 the State Government made a gesture towards reform through the Hyderabad Bhagela Agreement Regulation. As its name implied, the intention was to set out conditions for agreements between *bhagelas* and their employers. The main provisions were that interest was to be fixed at 6% and that the agreement was to be rendered void on the death of the *bhagela* [Qureshi 1947: 73]. This was not a success. Four years later in the report on the Labour Census it was stated that the measure had not had much effect yet—in fact no agreements had been registered! This was put down to the *bhagelas* having been under an inferiority complex for generations, and so being too timid and backward to complain against their all-powerful employers [Labour Census Report 1940: 34-35].

Vetti (sometimes delightfully called free compulsory labour) was rather different in that it was raised generally from all the rest of the villagers who were not sufficiently wealthy to resist the *deshmukh's* demands [Kesava Iyengar 1931a: 125]. Often there were a number of Madiga (an untouchable caste) families in village who were hereditarily attached to the *deshmukh* and performed a number of duties, but these were not the same as the general levy [for a description of the *vetti-madigas*, see Singh 1969: 25-26]. *Vetti*

was demanded without notice or payment, and consequently there was no limit to the amount of labour that might be extracted. The ostensible justification was that the *deshmukh's* ancestors had taken *vetti* from the villagers' ancestors, but this wasn't usually needed—their power was quite sufficient to get peasants and labourers into their fields *first*, before doing their own work [Sundarayya 1972: 14]. Other pretexts for the mass levying of *vetti* was a wedding in the landlord's family or the building of a home [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973: 4]. The larger the amount of land a *deshmukh* owned, the more *vetti* he had to extract to get the benifit of it. Thus it was that the largest *deshmukhs*, such as the Visnur *deshmukh* (40,000 acres) and the Janareddy family (1,50,000 acres) of Nalgonda district were hated and feared as the most rapacious of *deshmukhs* [Sundarayya 1972: 15].

As was mentioned before, one of the ways in which the *deshmukhs* kept their grip on the peasants of Telengana was by the manipulation of the excise system. The cheapest form of alcohol available was and is the juice of the palmyra palm—toddy. Like other areas in India, it is tapped by a separate caste of toddy-tappers, very low on the ritual scale but not untouchables. As everywhere else in the world, this trade was very profitable, and so attracted the attention of the *deshmukhs*.

Until the mid-1930s the Excise Department of the Hyderabad Government collected excise duty by way of auctioning the right to collect excise duty. Although this involved them in very little expense it gave the contractors (80% of whom were landlords) the right to mint money. The previous legal position had been that the owners of any piece of land had no rights over any toddy-trees standing on it. Excise contractors did. Not only did they get the money from the toddy but they also made toddy-tappers pay for each tree that they worked on. This gave the *deshmukhs* a regular cash income, part of which they used to finance their small industrial undertakings (see Chapter Two). The largest contractors, such as the powerful Pingli family (the activities of one member of which we have noted above), had managers in several districts and could in fact set up a parallel administration through their manipulation of the excise system.

From the mid-30s the government tried to set up a new system based on direct collection by taxing each and every toddy-tree individually. This ran into a lot of problems, because it not only

needed a much larger trained staff than before but also because there was a great opportunity for the tree-markers to be bribed. Like a lot of the other administrative reforms, it was very ineffectual.

Tenure Rights

Because of Salar Jung's administrative reforms, in theory at least the government dealt with a group of independent cultivators known as *pattadars* (a *patta* of course being the certificate of ownership). This covered everyone from the largest *deshmukh* to the poorest peasant. As it was put in the Hyderabad Land Revenue Act of 1317[1]:

> (the *pattadar*) . . . is the person . . . directly responsible to the Government for the payment of land revenue and whose name has been entered as such in Government records, whether he be personally in possession of the holding or through his '*shikmidar*'.

This arrangement reflected the general principle of traditional Indian land revenue collection that it was not the land that was important but rather the crop and various rights over it. This had been confused by the introduction of the market economy in land by the British from the end of the eighteenth century. By this time both land and crops were regarded as fair game by anyone on the make. Nevertheless Hyderabad land revenue law was still based on sharing out the crop.

There was a sub-group known as *pot-pattadars*, who farmed a portion of the *pattadars*' land, paid the land revenue in proportion, and could not be evicted or have their payments increased as long as they continued to do so. The *shikmidars* were an institution peculiar to Hyderabad. They were tenants who could not be evicted as long as they paid rent according to the agreement which they had with the *pattadar*, or according to local usage and previous practice if there was no formal agreement. The institution was a relic:

> It represents a class of people who either from the commencement or from the time that the *patta* was granted, cultivate the

[1]The Hyderabad State used a calendar of Persian origin, called the Fasli era. 1317 represents 1907-08.

land jointly with the *pattadars*. This is perhaps a relic of the old farming system, when blocks of land used to be given for joint cultivation. [Tenancy Committee 1940: 22].

There was another group, *asami-shikmis*, who were tenants-at-will paying rent either by agreement, or according to what was paid the previous year, or according to rent raised from *asami-shikmis* farming similar land in the neighbourhood. Or in other words, as much as the *pattadar* (read *deshmukh*) could get. Theoretically speaking, *asami-shikmis* got *shikmidari* rights if they occupied the same land for twelve continuous years. Not surprisingly, very few were left in possession for that period of time [Tenancy Committee 1940: 23]. Just to confuse the matter, the usual term for tenants-at-will was *kowldars*. There were no specific conditions for what constituted one—once again it was as much as the landlord could squeeze out of him or her.

The Tenancy Committee were agitated by this state of affairs, and wanted *asami-shikmis* to get *shikmidari* rights after six years, with one year's notice of eviction. Since their own report had shown that tenants were moved on after two or three years it is hard to see what they hoped to gain by this change. They also wanted rent receipts to be made mandatory, fines introduced for charging illegal cesses, and the *jagirdari* areas to be surveyed by the Revenue Department and *patta* rights fixed as *jagirdars* were posing as owners of land rather than as revenue grantees [Tenancy Committee 1940: 26-27]. They concluded:

> . . . the Tenancy Committee begs to observe that the present practice in *khalsa* [government-administered—BP] villages of treating *asami-shikmis* cultivating the same land for long periods as tenants-at-will and in alienated villages of *jagirdars* as calling themselves and their relatives as *pattadars* of land in the same villages, is not healthy, as it is not conducive to the increase of wealth in the country. In view of the fact that one-third of the cultivating population is almost landless (a state of things that is aggravated by much land having till now passed into the hands of money-lenders and sowcars), it is desirable to adopt early measures for their relief so as to make the peasant proprietors and tenantry contented with their lot. Reform in the

law is necessary for economic, social and political reasons. [Tenancy Committee 1940: 30-31].

So spoke the voice of informed, enlightened Hyderabad official opinion. Like most of the many similar proposals made during the period it could be no more than whistling in the dark, because it was the class which formed the basis of the state in the rural areas that was being criticised. The 'early measures' desired by the committee turned up in 1945 as the Asami-Shikmis Act. It implemented the recommendations of the Tenancy Committee. Within a year the *deshmukhs* of Telengana were at war with their tenants. Even more than usual, legislation was shown to be irrelevant to what happened in the Indian countryside.

Peasants and Labourers

In fact legal categories tell us very little about the social organisation of Telengana, although the forms of tenure had some effect on the precise forms of exploitation. We have already seen that underneath the *deshmukhs* and *jagirdars* there was a group of merchants (known as *sahukars* or *sowcars*) who did not usually deal in land. Between the landlords and the *bhagelas* there was a jumble of peasant families, ranging from people on the verge of making it into the landlord class to those scratching out a living on a miserable piece of land and up to their eyeballs in debt. The usual method of analysing this situation, and indeed of practically every other agrarian society nowadays, is to divide up the peasant population into three broad categories which are rather indefinite: rich peasant, middle peasant, poor peasant. It is not quite clear where this format first emerged from, but most of the important debates about peasant revolution made use of it [for instance Alavi 1965 and Wolf 1971] and the categories have now passed into general use in the literature. It is not a satisfactory categorization partly because it is so vague, which means that the boundaries have to be quite drastically re-drawn whenever you talk about a different area, but mainly because it does not satisfactorily explain what actually happens in a large number of situations—including Telengana. While I shall attempt an overall critique of this approach in discussing the policy of the Communist Party of India, at this stage it has some utility in that much of the literature on the movement employs it and it does in a general way *describe* the landholding situation of the peasants of

Telengana before World War II.

There were small landlords, that is to say people who owned land in one or two villages rather than having the massive holdings of the *deshmukhs* mentioned earlier. These people would tend to have a smaller percentage of their land let out on tenancy, but on the other hand they were in general much more severe on their tenants as they lived right on top of them and had a smaller margin of error than did a *deshmukh*. Because they actually lived in the village where they had the bulk of their lands they were in a good position to use the caste argument to pull the dominant peasant community (in Telengana usually either the Reddy or Velama caste) in behind them, often themselves posing as really being rich peasants.

A rich peasant was distinguished from a landlord by the use of family labour in cultivation. This can be confusing, in that in some peasant communities women do not go to work in the fields whatever the economic position of the family, while it is generally the case that one measure of prosperity and social standing is that women do not work in the fields. In any case the rich peasant farm requires the use of paid labourers. It has more land than can be worked by the family unit, and produces a surplus above the level needed to maintain the family. In the case of Telengana the rich peasants used this surplus, mainly rice, for grainlending. This was the route by which a rich peasant family could grow into a landlord family—if they were allowed to. The rich peasant complaint was that they were as much subject to illegal exactions and the depredations of landlord-controlled officials as anyone else.

The typical middle peasant family would own enough land to satisfy its own consumption needs but which was still small enough to be cultivated by the family's own labour. The bigger the family, the bigger the labour force, which was the logic behind the joint family system and large numbers of children. Joint farming would continue even in many cases where there were separate houses, and the families would pool the income. At harvesting and transplanting (of rice) times, they would need to hire extra people because of the limited time available to perform these operations. At these times about 20-30% of a farm's labour would be hired, although in some cases people would help each other in turn. In general it was and is a hand to mouth existence, with the probability of indebtedness if they were hit by famine, disease, a daughter's

marriage, or an economic recession. They could get loans because they had a guaranteed income and something to lose if they couldn't pay--which generally happened once they got into debt. Politically speaking at this time (the 1930s) they were under the influence of the landlords or rich peasants of their own community.

At no time did poor peasants and agricultural labourers constitute less than 60% of the rural population. This figure cannot be definitely verified from official statistics because of the categories that they used (for the ultimate expose of Indian census techniques and how they can be used to rewrite history see Thorner 1957) but it can be shown to be generally accurate. The 1931 Census showed agricultural labourers to be 33% of the rural population [Census 1931: 157]. The 1951 figure was 17%, but the methods used made the findings worthless.

The poor peasant family would have some land but not enough to meet its consumption needs so adults would have to work as artisans or more usually as labourers. An agricultural labourer might have some land too, but in this case it would be a positive disadvantage to waste time trying to cultivate it. It would almost invariably be low fertility dry land. It isn't possible to separate these groups precisely because by their nature they would tend to merge into each other. In any case it is unlikely that a poor peasant would have a plough and the two bullocks necessary to cultivate the land properly. This led to the apparently peculiar situation of some rich peasants and landlords spare plough capacity leasing land from poor peasants.

The numbers of agricultural labourers were greatest in Warangal (1,24,400 in 1931) and both in that district and in Nalgonda the number of labourers was 40% of that of peasants of all kinds [Labour Census 1937: 24]. There was a considerable amount of seasonal labour because of the double-cropping common in much of Telengana and this produced some mobility of labourers during harvesting [Labour Census 1937: 143]. By this time wages were only usually paid in kind during the harvesting season, otherwise in cash [Kesava Iyengar 1951: 220]. Ordinarily people would be working long hours—usually no less than nine per day—and could be guaranteed no more than four to six months' work per year [Qureshi 1947: 71]. For the rest of the year those without land would be dependent on getting casual work from the Public Works Department or the railways. But not everyone could do this—in

1931 there were only about 4,20,000 officially recorded in these categories as against 15,00,000 agricultural labourers. This would mean that agricultural labourer families were continually living on the margins of subsistence, with the ever-present possibility of being thrown down into perpetual debt and the existence of a *bhagela* family to live off—fifteen acres of dry land or five acres of wet. Now out of 980 dry land holdings we saw that 806 were of less than fifteen acres and out of 636 wet land holdings 545 were less than five acres. Even given that some people compensated for a lack of dry land by having some wet land, that certainly leaves the bulk of the rural population below the subsistence line, and would exceed the earlier figure of 60% for the total number of poor peasants and agricultural labourers.

It is not easy to demarcate the lines between the other groups, but there were very few dry land holdings over 50 acres (only 27), so 40-50 acres would appear to have been the take-off point as far as accumulating a sufficient surplus to start buying land would have been concerned. From 15-30 acres there were 98 holdings, while from 30-50 there were only 49 [Kesava Iyengar 1931a:116]. It would be taking too much on trust to say that these were the dividing lines between middle and poor peasants, but the figures do indicate the trend and where the groups faded into each other, and their relative strengths.

To emphasise the point let us look at a village survey made as part of the 1949-50 economic investigations, in a village in Nalgonda district. Local opinion there was that the 'economic holding' for a family would be eight acres of wet land or sixty acres of dry [Reddy 1950: 5]. Which means that out of the 194 dry land holdings no more than 16 would reach even middle peasant status, the corresponding figures for wet land being nine out of 93. Even allowing for exaggeration which perhaps was aimed at influencing and reform legislation, it still shows the same general pattern. So does the study of a Telengana village done in 1951-52 by S.C. Dube. He found that one family owned 800 acres, eight others approximately 100 each, 20 more about 40 acres, and another 169 no more than five acres each [Dube 1955 : 72]. Even these figures understated the situation, for he found that one holding of four acres of dry land and six acres of wet land was in fact being shared, and cultivated jointly, by seven families [Dube 1955: 73]. On top of this, 110 out of the 380 families in the village had no land at all [Dube 1955: 74].

All this supports the proposition that there was great concentration of landed wealth, with a majority of the rural population trying to secure an existence with little or no land. A much smaller number of families managed simply to maintain themselves, while an even smaller number were working hard to get into the landlord class.

But as we have seen, the domination of the *deshmukhs* was the decisive factor in the Telengana countryside during the first three decades of the country. Telengana was not quarantined from the rest of the world, however, and when the recession of 1930 broke, the combination of changes introduced because of the needs of the world economy and the power of the *deshmukhs* produced a series of unparalleled upheavals.

2 The New Crops

As I mentioned before, the *deshmukhs* were unable to keep more than a few hundred acres under their direct control. Since many of them had much more land than that, they tended to keep the best of the irrigated land for themselves. This was cultivated mainly by *bhagelas* and the paddy used for grain-lending. Not only was this very profitable (the interest tended to be in the range of 25%), but it also consolidated their political control over the peasants. As we saw before, debts became so large that they were passed on from generation to generation.

From the late 1920s there was the development of small-scale rice mills. By 1941 there were 204 rice and pulse mills, 214 mills for decorticating, as well as 172 mills for processing oil seeds and 351 for ginning cotton (most of these were in Marathwada and Karnataka). They were not very large establishments—the largest rice mill had 81 workers and the largest ginning works 261—and most had less than 40. They were, however, almost all equipped with some kind of oil or steam engine [Statistical Yearbook 1941: Table XLIII]. The processed grain was then sent to the district towns and to Hyderabad, most of the mills being in the rural areas. The proceeds at this stage only constituted a minor part of the *deshmukhs* income, and the rice mills represented only the first tentative encroachment of capitalist agri-business into Telengana.

Rice was a food-crop with a local market. Even in the nineteenth century commercial crops with a potentially much wider market had been grown in some areas of Telengana:

> It is said that the castor-crop in these Taluks is so rich and fine that, from the sale-proceeds of this one single article, the ryots are not only able to pay off their Government dues, but they are also able to maintain themselves all the year round without having recourse to any other trade or industry. [Settlement Report of Nalgonda and Dewalpalli Talukas 1901: 19]
>
> One peculiarity of the Taluks under report or of the District to which they belong, is that the cultivation of castor-seeds is carried on very widely, so much so that it may be stated that

> castor-seeds form the chief source of wealth of the people . . . these seeds are exported to the nearest market in British India, whence they are exported to England through local agencies. [*Settlement Report* . . . 1901:32]

Apart from this the traditional commercial crop had been tobacco and chillies, grown on areas of black cotton soil. In Telengana these soils were not usually cultivated by local people as they did not usually possess large enough draught cattle to work the land. Peasants from the Krisna and Guntur districts of the coastal Andhra area, then part of Madras Presidency in British India, were encouraged by the Hyderabad Government to come and cultivate these lands. The Charminar cigarette factory in Hyderabad used local tobacco and loaned fertiliser to peasants growing tobacco on a guaranteed return.

The growth of the number of mills for the processing of oil-seeds did however represent a significant change. Earlier I remarked that the soil of Telengana was essentially sand on top of granite. Without irrigation or fertiliser it is very infertile soil. So apart from the fact that they did not have the organizational capacity to farm the land, the *deshmukhs* had no real reason to try to find one, or to let it out to tenants, as the returns would have been minimal. Only where there were areas of black cotton soil (not many in Telengana) could they have a reasonable guarantee of getting a worthwhile return from dry land crops such as jawar.

The New Crops

The result was that hundreds of thousands of acres of land were left fallow, or were used as pasture for cattle—until a number of new crops were introduced. Castor had already been cultivated on a limited scale in Nalgonda district, and then expanded greatly. It was followed by Til (sesamum) and most important of all, groundnut. Two things made them very important. Firstly, they could thrive on the poor soil of Telengana with the minimum of attention. Secondly, they were oil-seeds not only in demand locally but even more so from the industrial metropolitan countries. In some instances these countries actively sponsored the cultivation of groundnut in their colonies, the French in Senegal, later on the British in Tanganyika. Responding to demand from metropolitan capital, cultivation of these crops in Hyderabad laapt ahead: by 1940 the castor acreage

of Hyderabad was 54.3% of the total Indian area; the comparable figures for groundnut and sesamum were 15.8% and 13.5% respectively. [Qureshi 1947:53-56]. More important were the amounts which went for exports. In 1937 the figures were:

Linseed	97%
Castor	71%
Groundnut	98%
Sesamum	31%

[*Trade Statistics* 1936-37:44]

As far as castor was concerned, castor provided no less than 86% of total UK imports and 88% of those of the USA 72 %of the total Indian exports went to the UK [The Hyderabad Farmer July 1931:2]. There was a higher price for exported crops—in 1937 for castor it was 5 rupees 6 pies a maund, as against a local price of 4 rupees 10 pies. Comparative prices also partially explain the rapid adoption of groundnut, in 1936, for example, the average market price per unit of groundnut was approximately twice that of jawar, while castor was only about 25% greater. [*Trade Statistics* 1936-374].

Castor exports from Hyderabad in that same year were 75.8% of the Indian total, while those of groundnuts were 21.2 %. Of the groundnuts exported from Hyderabad 50 per cent went by way of Bombay and 26% through Madras [*Trade Statistics* 1936-37:62].

This meant that much more of the Hyderabad economy was incorporated into the world market. Previously the only connection of importance had been the cultivation of cotton in Marathwada. Now at almost all the major markets in Telengana the mills and exporting firms bought direct from peasants and landlords and made contracts for forward delivery. This brought the world market price direct to the heart of Telengana, and ousted local small dealers from the market [*Hyderabad Banking Enquiry Report* 1930:46-47]. The rapid expansion of the cultivation of commercial oil-seeds did more than make Telengana and the whole of the state that much more sensitive to shifts in the world economy. It also changed the balance of forces inside Telengana itself.

Now those hundreds of thousands of acres of dry sandy soil were no longer a liability. They could be cultivated with the new crops. In 1925 there were 3,000 acres of groundnut in Telengana. In 1937 the figure was 6,27,538 acres [*Trade Statistics* 1940-41:211]. By 1941

groundnut occupied the third highest acreage of any crop in Hyderabad:

Food crops		*Commercial crops*	
Jawar	33.18%	Cotton	13.75%
Bajra	5.57%	Groundnut	6.85%
Rice	4.52%	Castor	2.72%
Wheat	3.87%	Linseed	1.68%

[*Agricultural Statistics* 1940-45: Table XXIII]

In Telengana it was the second crop, as almost all of the cotton was grown in Marathwada. Groundnut and castor strengthened the hands of the *deshmukhs*, for they had the land available to make the most of the new situation. The family peasant farm did grow the new crops, but their marginal position was described by the manager of Volkarts, a Bombay engineering company:

> The Nizam's territory, north of the Krishna river and south of the railway line, Secunderabad to Bezwada, etc., is a stony country, huge boulders of Granite lying about and wherever thers is room between a few such rocks, castor seed is planted. More to the south-west of the castor-seed belt of Hyderabad, the granite boulders disappear from the landscape and slope into flanking flat valleys. The rains are often very scanty in the regions and for this reason the fields in the valleys are exclusively reserved for food crops which have to be attended to immediately the first rains set in. It is only after the farmer has finished work connected with food crops that he can devote his attention to the castor seed which is grown on the slopes. It is only in the years with a higher rainfall and particularly when the rains have been well distributed that something like the maximum acreage possible is obtained. I think I am not far wrong in saying that hardly once in 10 years more than 50% of lands that might be suitable for castor seed are put under the plough. [*Agricultural Statistics* 1940-45:224-225]

Small peasant families would grow groundnut and castor as a means to pay off debts and land revenue demands. Unfortunately for them, what also happened as commercial cultivation increased

was that landlords increased rents. More than that, the *deshmukhs* now preferred to have dry land under their direct control. Evictions increased as they tried to gather up as much of the land as possible. As we shall see later, they were assisted in this by the movement of the world economy.

Peasant families with a surplus over and above their consumption requirements also began to cultivate the new crops. Because their farming was much more closely supervised than that of the *deshmukhs* and because they had less leeway to make mistakes, the productivity of their land tended to be greater than those of the *deshmukhs*. This is just another example of the general tendency of independent producers to be more productive in terms of output/person than capitalist enterprises. The latter are interested in the rate of profit, the return on capital. The independent producer in contrast is interested in the size of total revenue, and so puts in large amounts of labour for a small additional income in order to increase the total aggregate income. This is a feature of independent producers in other branches of production, of course.

In Telengana, the *deshmukhs* certainly depressed the income of rich peasants. Not only did they block them acquiring land, but their role as the rural social base of the state meant that, in general, no capital was made available to rich peasants by the state. Because of the political control that they exerted rich peasants were as liable to illegal exactions as anyone else. On the other hand, if the rich peasant had any debts that needed to be called then the claim could only be enforced by the leave of the *deshmukh*.

State Intervention

Groundnut became the most important commercial crop as castor lost out to foreign competition and because the demand for oil-seeds grew as the metropolitan countries re-armed.

	Groundnut	*Castor*	*Jawar*
1931-35 av	9,80,000	7,72,000	9,227,000
1939-40	19,59,000	6,71,000	1,04,11,000

(Figures in acres) [Qureshi 1947:53-56]

The Hyderabad State Government was very concerned that the production of groundnut should be increased. To this end they

vigorously promoted the spread of improved high-yield varieties. The yield of almost every crop was less in Hyderabad than in the rest of India:

	Hyderabad yield	*All-India yield*
Jawar	343	429
Rice	837	748
Wheat	302	660
Cotton	62	92
Castor	173	203
Groundnut	708	883

(Figures in lb/acre) [Qureshi 1947:Ch IV]

The historical basis for this was that until the end of the nineteenth century agriculture had been dominated by rent receivers (the Marwaris) or revenue collectors (*jagirdars* and pre-reform *deshmukhs*). This had begun to change in Telengana as the *deshmukhs* partially involved themselves in production. The Department of Agriculture of the State Government made some efforts to persuade all kinds of landholders to take up high-yield strains. The Agriculture Report of 1931-32 noted that a new variety of groundnut was spreading rapidly and that a number of 'influential gentlemen' were beginning to adopt methods advocated by the Department on their farms. The next year they reported 6,000 acres as being under the new variety, and in 1933-34 18,373 acres. By 1934-35 there were 39,396 acres under improved varieties, and four years later the figure was 1,98,961 acres, or about 10% of the total acreage.

New varieties were not only confined to groundnut. The Agriculture Department produced a new variety of cotton and was responsible for much of the distribution of the seed. In 1933-34 there were 31,934 acres under the new variety which four years later had increased to 1,88,095 acres. There had been regulation of the cotton crop for a long time before this, to maintain the quality of what was then Hyderabad's only export of any consequence. The Agriculture Department also developed a new strains of rice, Himayatsagar No 504 (named after the Department's Agricultural Research Station) which under test in 1934 gave yields between 2,500 and 4,000 lb per acre depending on the soil conditions and on quality of cultivation. By 1938-39 it was being cultivated on 6,613 acres.

The most spectacular achievement of this policy came in the case of sugar-cane, where the construction of large-scale irregation works and the introduction of new high-yield varieties combined to change the nature of agriculture of a whole area.

Although the area of irregated land was only a small proportion of the total usable land, it was true that out of the water resources of Hyedrabad of approximately one billion cubic feet only about 10% was utilised for irrigation [Qureshi 1947:88]. 80% of the irrigated area was in Telengana and most of that was under tank rather than canal or well irrigation. Although there was apparently some decline in the irrigated area during the war, in 1945 about 5% of the area of Telengana was under irrigation.

	Canals	*Tanks*	*Wells*
1920	67,793	3,44,592	2,68,081
1930	1,52,398	6,34,084	4,39,611
1940	1,27,000	9,23,000	4,80,000
1945	1,30,000	8,43,000	3,54,044

(Figures in acres) [Qureshi 1947:94-96]

The Hyderabad State Government had been responsible for the construction of several large-scale irrigation works at the beginning of the century. Between 1924 and 1931 there was constructed the largest project to date, the Nizamsagar Dam on the Manjra River, a tributary of the Godavari, fifty miles north of Hyderabad city. It stored 25,600 million cubic feet of water over an area of 56 square miles. Previously irrigation in that area had been provided by 800 small tanks, irrigating a total of 30,000 acres. When the canal irrigation provided by Nizamsagar became available the irrigated area rapidly increased, so that by 1944 there were 94,796 acres under irrigation [Qureshi 1947:91]. Apart from an increase in the cultivation of rice, the Nizamsagar Project led to the creation of an enclave of sugar production on a capitalist basis.

On January 1st 1934 an application for facilities in forming a sugar manufacturing company was submitted to the government by a very high-powered group of signatories. It included 25 'Noblemen and Jagirdars', 27 'Bankers and Businessmen', 18 serving Government officers and 22 landlords from the Nizamabad area where the dam was being built. They asked the government to provide one-

third of the necessary share-capital, exemption from taxes for 30 years, and as much irrigated land as they wanted, on the basis that Nizamsagar could meet the internal demand for sugar which meant that at that time 20,000 tons had to be imported annually. This argument carried some weight, and in 1936 the Government sponsored the company to the extent of becoming a 50% share-holder [Wadiyar 1963:3]. Unfortunately for them, other people could not be convinced so easily and the entire capital could not be raised. So that in 1938 the Goverment had to take over the company through the Industrial Trust Fund [Wadiyar 1963:4].

The dam was built, however. It was supposed to take 50% of its intake from its own farms in the irrigation area, and the other 50% from local farmers. Worried about low yields and the low price of paddy, they changed to the cultivation of sugar-cane. Then the factory could not take all of the cane that they produced, so that in 1938 they planted only 700 acres. This produced a shortage, so that in 1939 they were persuaded to plant 4,000 acres, and 8,000 acres in 1940. This was followed by the Government of India reducing the price of sugar from 9 annas per maund[2] to 7 annas. In 1941 only 2,000 acres was planted with sugar-cane [Wadiyar 1963:5-6].

In 1960 there was over 20,000 acres producing sugarcane, 15,000 of which were supplying the factory. Aditionally 200,000 acres of rice were being cultivated by 'Japanese' methods [Wadiyar 1963:15-16].

To encourage cultivation and increase productivity the State Agricultural Research Station spent a lot of time in the 1930s developing improved strains. Between 1930 and 1933 the area under the high-yield strain CO 213 increased from 51 to 2,000 acres, not only in Nizamsagar but also in other areas of canal irrigation [*Agricultural Report* 1933:22], which increased to 6,567 acres in 1934. The extra yield gained was quite spectacular. Tests carried out on the Government's Experimental Farm gave the following results:

[2]There were sixteen annas to the rupee prior to decimalization. A maund is equivalent to $22\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

Variety	*Yield*
POJ 2878	12,001
CO 290	11,481
CO 213	10,728
Local (Pandya)	4,941

(Figures in lb/acre) [Hyderabad Farmer: April 1935]

The extra profit per acre was estimated at being 100-200 rupees an acre in excess of local varieties. By 1935 the Agricultural Department could report that there was now 14,359 acres under CO 213 and that it was so profitable that it was taking over from rice in some areas. In 1939 CO 213 itself was being replaced by the new further improved varieties CO 290 and POJ 2878.

These developments did not change the face of Telengana overnight. There is an endless argument over the nature of the Indian economy and especially of agriculture—whether it is capitalist, feudal, a bit of each, or something entirely different. The question is important, because the answer to this question partly determined the strategy of the communist movements, both in the 1940s and in the contemporary period. This will be dealt with at greater length in Chapter IV, but a couple of points are worth making here.

The extension of the cultivation of commercial crops made it possible for the *deshmukhs* and *jagirdars* to be more than landowners who supplemented their income through rent-receiving, revenue collecting and money-lending. Now participation in the world market meant that they could use the vast areas of unirrigated land to grow groundnut, which yielded them a substantial surplus. This relative productivity of groundnut also induced almost every other kind of cultivator to move into its cultivation, either for increasing personal consumption, or the payment of debts or revenue. In any case the production of groundnut (and less importantly, castor and sugar-cane) as commodities became of central importance for all kinds of producers from large *deshmukhs* to poor peasants. The State Government definitely attempted to encourage not only the production of commodities but also capitalist farming, by giving certain farmes access to capital in the form of irrigation facilities, and improved seed, although not at this time fertiliser or machinery. Because of the social structure of the ruling class,

however, in general this capital was only available to *deshmukhs* and *jagirdars*, which would have serious political consequence for the regime in the 1940s.

Even though the economy of Telengana only began to experience substantial incorporation into the world market after World War I, this was still sufficient for the immense recession which overtook the world economy in 1930 to produce shattering results for the Telengana peasants.

3 The Two Crises

Because of the extension of cultivation of commercial crops and the market economy into the rural areas the onset of the Depression was devastating for the Hyderabad State. In July 1931 the Director General of Commerce and Industries in the Hyderabad State Government was reporting on the appalling state of the Raichur Co-operative Credit Bank in Karnataka. In the course of this he said:

> . . . there is no doubt that this year in one of unparalleled misfortune owing to the catastrophic fall in prices, and this fall probably hit Raichur district worse than any other district. This district has the largest area under groundnut in the Dominions, the acreage in 1928-29 being 1,30,000 acres and for no other commodity was the fall more precipitate or worse timed. The other main crops are cotton and jawar and in both of these the fall in prices was very marked. In fact the Revenue Authorities have had great difficulties in collecting their land revenue, and a certain sum is still outstanding. [C & I Dept, File 169/40].

The report went on to say how the cultivators were being doubly affected by the Depression. While their assets in land depreciated as values fell, their money debts were in effect almost doubled because of the fall in the prices that they got for their crops. An additional problem was that the slump occurred just at the time that one of the land revenue payments was due. That meant that they were selling in a particularly disadvantageous situation, and had to take what they could get. This was followed by damage to the *kharif* (winter) crop and rat damage to the following ***rabi*** (summer). These disasters only made a desperate situation worse. The fall in prices were massive for all crops:

Base: 1921-22=100

	28-9	*29-30*	*30-1*	*31-2*	*32-3*	*33-4*
Rice	87	81	75	50	50	48
Wheat	62	59	48	37	37	36
Jawar	75	73	45	43	43	43
Castor	78	80	65	56	58	47
Cotton	83	78	65	75	72	66

[Qureshi 1947:255]

Groundnut, the one major crop not on the table, fared worst of all. In this period its price fell by 68.5%, being affected by additional measures such as import controls in Germany and heavy import duties imposed on groundnut by France for imports from anywhere except French colonies. In fact the food crops which were consumed within the state, rice, jawar, and wheat, fared as badly as the commercial crops which were exported to the metropolitan countries.

The fall in prices affected practically everyone, especially those peasants who did own land. Even though they would be producing primarily to meet their own consumption needs, because the land revenue demand was in cash they had to market a proportion of their crop. If they were indebted the slump meant even greater trouble. The only way to get around the problems appeared to be to grow more. This is what initially happened. During the worst years of Depression the production of some crops actually increased. The total area under cultivation increased from 10 million acres in 1928-29 to 11 million in 1931-32 and 13 million in 1933-34. The problem was that the value of the crops that reached the market had fallen dramatically.

Production in '000 tons

	28-9	*29-30*	*30-1*	*31-2*	*32-3*	*33-4*
Rice	403.4	150.9	177.9	389.3	292.5	364.4
Wheat	62.4	107.4	135.1	161.4	168.3	148.7
Groundnut	62.8	64.1	164.8	213.2	314.9	373.6
Jawar	1,410.3	1,315.0	1,305.2	1,017.6	1,275.3	1,161.3
Castor	37.4	33.4	45.1	63.4	60.7	66.6
Cotton	895.1	446.7	381.8	509.4	523.8	563.9

(Bales of 400 lb) [Qureshi 1947:258]

Because of the collapse in prices, the increase in castor production, for instance, only produced an increase in money income of $5\frac{1}{4}\%$. Crop conditions coupled with the Depression were so severe that the money value of the cotton crop fell by 50% in the period 1928-34 (Qureshi 1947:260-1]. For most of the peasants there was no way in which they could make their farms more productive. Indeed the more they put on the market the less they had to consume themselves as they had very little surplus land that they could bring into production. In Telengana the people who could do this to get over the Depression were the *deshmukhs*, and to a lesser extent rich peasants. *Deshmukhs* could either cultivate their fallow land directly or let it out on tenancy. Either course would enhance their position in the rural economy.

Indebtedness

This grew considerably. The 1949-50 economic survey produced comparative statistics for indebtedness in the 118 villages surveyed. 62 were in Telengana, 56 in Marathwada/Karnataka. Given the probable inaccuracies in collecting statistics years after the event, the increase between 1930 and 1939 was 63% for the whole state. The regional figures showed a considerable disparity:

Telengana	89%
Marathwada	35%

[Iyengar 1951:436]

In at least one village, Chintapalli in Nalgonda district, the amount of debt more than doubled in the period (actually 126%) [Reddy 1950:235-241]. This would in a sense tie in with the 1929-30 survey, which found that up to that time Telengana peasants had lost less land than their counterparts in Marathwada. In other words, in Telengana there was more land available to be seized and there were more peasants as yet unencumbered by debt. Money-lenders became so bloated with land that during a government investigation into agricultural indebtedness in 1936 some money-lenders in Bidar district in Karnataka offered to stop lending to peasants if the government would pay off the debts at the rate of six annas to the rupee. Their reason was that they already had as much land as they could manage. In Raichur and Gulbarga money-lenders were willing to accept debt conciliation for the same reason [Barucha 1937:86-7].

This was in Karnataka where the conditions were broadly similar to those prevailing in Marathwada.

This was the difference between Telengana and the rest of the state. The *deshmukhs* were not sated with land and unlike the *sahukars* they were directly involved in production and had levers like *vetti* which they could use to get the land cultivated. The *deshmukhs* whether they were producing for capitalist profit or to meet their own consumption needs had to expand the area that they were cultivating. This was especially so as they had a new dry land crop which brought in a lot more income than jawar—groundnut. If they cultivated their own fallow land they required a larger work-force. They could then use the increase of indebtedness to make peasants supply more *vetti*. If they dispossessed people then they could be used either as labourers or as tenants.

There was a significant increase in indebtedness in Telengana during the 1930s. In some areas it would have been massive, bearing in mind that the burden would have been greater than the simple figures show. The fall in prices meant that in real terms debts doubled, because the volume of crops that would have to be sold to pay off the debt increased in direct proportion to the fall in prices. The numbers of people in debt increased and those who were already in debt found themselves hopelessly trapped. Incapable of repaying interest because of their falling income, they were the first to lose their lands.

Even if they did not lose their land immediately, the effect of compound interest on the one hand, and of having to perform *vetti* at the crucial periods of the cultivation cycle, on the other, meant that their own crops were neglected and their own income reduced. On top of all that the usual social expenses remained—a marriage could ruin a family. Although many official reports [*e.g.* Barucha 1937] moaned on about peasants being responsible for their own plight, and of too much money being 'frittered away on unproductive objects,' the fact is that they had very little alternative. Short of a social revolution, there is no way that an Indian peasant family can avoid paying marriage expenses, dowry, and the services of a brahmin at festivals and family events, without suffering social degradation. Dowry is also an integral part of the peasant economy, in that it serves as one of the main ways in which property is transferred. To do away with all this would involve an attack on caste, religion, and the ruling class itself, which made the rules for their

own convenience and still indulge themselves in extravagant social expenditure on a scale far beyond the reach of any peasant family. But for them too it is a necessary social expense.

Even so, from the 1949-50 study of village Chintapalli the actual borrowing was not quite so 'frivolous' as was sometimes imagined. Out of 75 people in debt 24 had borrowed so that they could purchase cattle, one to purchase a cart, one for well repairs, and four for 'business.' 22 borrowed for 'household expenses,' 16 for marriage, two for house building, and two for paying their land revenue [Reddy 1950:209-234]. This reveals another pressure point for a peasant family—if you did not have a pair of draught animals you were in deep trouble, especially if this happened during the ploughing season. A *deshmukh* or money-lender could then charge a much higher rate of interest than otherwise because of the necessity of ploughing the land in a certain period of time.

Once they were so impoverished that they were unable to even pay interest, the *deshmukh* could then dispossess them, leave them cultivating the land take as much as possible in rent. Alternatively he could evict if he had enough labourers to work the land, or if it was contiguous to plots that he already owned. Whatever happened the peasants lost their lands and their means of a livelihood. They were now producing for the *deshmukh*. This happened to a large number of peasant families during the slump and the slow recovery was of no help at all.

There are unfortunately no statistics to show exactly how much land was taken by *deshmukhs* as a result of the Depression. The 1949-50 economic survey only recorded land transferred during the previous year. The lack of these data can be laid at the door of the administration, which had little interest in undermining the position of the *deshmukhs*. The latter were also very adept at manipulating records in their own favour. All contemporary accounts agree that the loss of land by peasants to *deshmukhs* was substantial, however, and there is no counter-evidence which attempts to disprove this conclusion.[3]

[3]For instance, the interview with D.V. Rao 1974, and the works of Sundarayya 1972 and Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973. The latter recounts how in 1931 a poor peasant sold him his entire holding of two acres for twenty-five rupees—a knock-down price—simply to be able to meet immediate consumption needs of his family (p 5).

Recovery

From 1936 there was a slight recovery in most agricultural prices. The index remains 1921:100.

	33-4	*34-5*	*35-6*	*36-7*	*37-8*
Rice	48	55	54	56	58
Wheat	36	34	33	44	44
Jawar	43	54	49	53	51
Castor	47	50	54	64	60
Cotton	66	75	74	79	73

[Qureshi 1947:268]

One reason for wheat remaining at such a low level was that the drive to cultivate more had made it very difficult to sell on the open market. Groundnut did better than all of the crops shown on the table and its price doubled in the period 1933-37 [Qureshi 1947: 270]. This again benefited those who had the land available to cultivate groundnut. Again the movement of the world economy served to strengthen the position of the *deshmukhs* relative to that of peasants.

The Second Crisis—World War II

The Second World War had devastating effects on areas that were touched by actual combat. The two alliances, mobilizing every possible resource in their struggle for total victory, gave the most developed example to date of the logic of capitalism in the age of imperialism. Total victory, unconditional surrender, and the destruction of your opponent's economy were the war aims of 1939-45.

As a result of this, not only did the armed forces of the combatants range far and wide but the economies of most areas of the world were distorted by the war. Firstly, economic relations were greatly restricted and secondly, certain sectors of the economy were developed to meet the special needs of the war, while others were allowed to decay. These developments changed the course of events in wide areas of the world. There could be no return to 'normal relations' partly because of changed political situations (such as in Eastern Europe) and partly because the alterations in the economies could not be undone. There were different economic relations between countries in 1945 compared with 1939 and they could not be changed

even if those in the dominant positions (the USA and the USSR) wished them to be, which they did not. They were now in a position to remodel their spheres of influence into shapes of their own liking. In this situation, India and its economy, tied to British imperialism and weakened by the Depression, took a severe beating. For the purposes of the war Hyderabad was integrated as much as possible into British India and suffered from the same problems.

The full effects of the war only came with the outbreak of the war in the east, which converted the conflict from a European one into a world war. The Japanese occupation of South-East Asia cut off the supplies of Burmese rice and Javanese sugar. The rice situation was by far the more serious for Hyderabad because it regularly imported some 68,000 tons a year from Burma. Because of the vulnerability of Indian agriculture to bad weather the effects of this was far greater than the bare amount would indicate, as the Burmese rice was an assured supply. By creating shortages the war had a general inflationary effect; with the index of 1921=100 the various crops went up as follows:

	1939	*1941*	*1942*	*1943*	*1944*
Rice	103	125	150	220	223
Wheat	101		137		272
Jawar			116		234

[Qureshi 1947:250-252]

Castor increased in price by 300% between 1939 and 1944. In an attempt to control prices, a mutual prices agreement with traders was tried. When this failed a system of maximum prices was set up. A Foodgrains Control Order was brought in to control the movement of stocks. Unfortunately hoarding was going on apace, in the correct anticipation that prices would continue to rise. Since the government did not have any physical control over the crops, all its measures failed miserably. In an attempt to get hoarded stocks released controls were lifted, but large amounts were still kept back in anticipation of further inflation.

The war also produced some significant shifts in the crops cultivated, which also exacerbated the food crisis. The figures show how the cultivation of dry land food crops—wheat, millet (jawar and bajra), and maize (gram)—actually declined. The production of rice

actually increased, but there are two points to remember. Firstly, there was a deficit of 68,000 tons to make good. Secondly, the main staples for the majority of families, and for many of the urban population as well, were the dry land crops, and rice was eaten only on special occasions. On the other hand, the production of castor and groundnut increased, the latter by over 50%. This only reflects the tendency that was noted before, that increasing prices of oil-seeds and other commercial crops led to a growth in their cultivation at the expense of food crops. More important were the consequences. The actual figures were:

	Jawar		*Wheat*		*Bajra*	
	Acreage	*Yield*	*Acreage*	*Yield*	*Acreage*	*Yield*
39-40	9,511	1,860	1,111	151	1,596	115
40-41	9,638	1,675	1,125	133	1,441	165
41-42	9,847	1,758	970	138	1,802	223
42-43	9,281	1,226	696	77	1,828	166
43-44	9,134	1,225	654	72	1,835	190

(All figures in '000s, yield in tons)

	Gram		*Rice*	
	Acreage	*Yield*	*Acreage*	*Yield*
39-40	532	915	1,295	519
40-41	609	813	784	215
41-42	412	617	1,180	499
42-43	429	507	1,403	436
43-44	433	751	1,299	488

(Figures in '000s, yield in tons) [Qureshi 1947:280-283]

The statistics sometimes show large increases in yields with a reduction in acreage. This might have had something to do with weather conditions but is rather more likely to have something to do with fraudulent returns. Given these drawbacks, they do indicate a drop in production on the outbreak of war in the east. Commercial crops show a rather different response:

	Groundnut		*Castor*		*Cotton*	
	Acreage	*Yield*	*Acreage*	*Yield*	*Acreage*	*Yield*
39-40	1,964	618	781	51	3,942	6,080
40-41	1,509	346	886	67	3,573	6,223
41-42	1,880	704	774	87	3,117	4,702
42-43	3,107	1,075	832	65	4,105	5,078
43-44	2,604	832	746	53	1,957	N/A

(Figures in '000s, yields in tons, cotton in bales)

[Qureshi 1947: 283-286]

Bad crop conditions in the early '40s contributed to the dip in some of the returns. They led to shortages rather than famine but this gave the opportunity for hoarding. The official food report could only claim that:

> In an economy influenced by the profit motive it was futile to expect that the cultivator would be more amenable than the trader to humanitarian consideration. Experience showed that he was as much swayed by a desire to make capital out of the helplessness of the landless consumer as any other business-man actuated by the urge to make profit. [*Food Administration Report* 1944: 3].

The 'cultivator' would only be one with enough of a surplus to be able to play the market. As we shall see, most 'cultivators' were in no such position. The problem was not confined to Hyderabad. The Government of India introduced a scheme under which there was to be a single Purchasing Agent for the procurement of food surpluses. There was to be a central policy for food distribution, with no movement of foodstuffs from deficit areas and only permitted exports from surplus areas, the movement of which would be in conformity with the distribution arrangements made by the central government. In other words, an attempt to solve the food crisis by direct state control, and a complete departure from the previous pattern of British rule in India. To ensure that the policy worked there was to be a levy on foodgrain producers.

The Levy System

The Hyderabad State Government decided that the purchase of

foodgrains under this system should be on their account and in 1943 formed the Hyderabad Commercial Corproation, with government capital. The Managing Director was one Mir Laik Ali, a Hyderabadi businessman who was to become prominent in the final years of the Hyderabad State. The actual enforcement of the levy was left to the local state officials, although a Central Food Advisory Committee was set up. One measure taken was to put a limit on the cultivation of non-food crops, especially cotton and groundnut.

This may have affected the figures for 1942-43 in the tables above, which were collected by a special Agricultural Census rather than through the Government Statistics Department. It showed that there was a considerable discrepancy in the acreage recorded, especially in the case of commercial crops (14% as against 8% for food crops). The yields recorded, however, were quite bizarre. In the Census, the area under food crops was shown to be down by 15%, while non-food crops were up by 30%. Jawar area increased by 30%, while the yield was down by 27%. Castor was supposed to be up by 70% in area, but the yield was down by 1%. What produced these peculiar discrepancies was partly the fact that statistical collection was rather inaccurate at the best of times, but rather more due to falsification prompted by a desire to avoid paying the foodgrain levy. The prices paid under the levy were between 10 and 20% lower than those prevailing immediately prior to the introduction of the scheme. [*Food Administration Report* 1944: 11-14]. The figures shown before reveal that the big jump in prices happened after 1942.

To attain the desired goal of self-sufficiency, the Government of India launched the "Grow-More-Food" Campaign in 1943. In Hyderabad this meant that the activities of the state in promoting improved cultivation methods were stepped up. For the first time this meant that dry land food crops were covered by the distribution of improved seeds. In the 1942-43 cultivation year 16,926 acres of jawar were cultivated with improved seeds. In 1943-44 this had increased to 1,27,010 acres. But when compared with the total of over nine million acres under jawar this can only have had a minimal effect. Other measures included a 50% remission of land revenue for growing food crops on land used for cotton in four Marathwada districts and a similar remission on the cultivation of foodcrops on cultivable waste land in all parts of the state [*Food*

Administration Report 1944:62-63]. This would explain incidents like that at Mundari village, Jalgaon taluka in Nalgonda district, where the *deshmukh* evicted the *lambadis* (tribal people) from waste lands that they were cultivating [Sundarayya 1972:29].

One more problem was that the levy price in Hyderabad was lower than that in the surrounding provinces of British India. This had the predictable effect of promoting smuggling, which was not inhibited by the rather ineffectual patrolling of the Hyderabad army and police:

Comparative Prices 1943

	Hyderabad	*Bombay*	*Madras*	*Central Prov.*
Rice	9-2-3	11-8-0	7-13-5	10-6-9
Jawar	6-0-0	7-0-3	8- 3-8	8-4-0
Bajra	6-4-3	7-9-6	6-10-8	

(Per maund in Rupees-annas-pies in British Government currency)
[*Food Administration Report* 1944:17]

A rationing system was introduced and rationcards, issued [*Food Administration Report* 1944:51]. Ration shops opened in Hyderabad and one of the district towns, Warangal. Unfortunately some of the rural areas, and especially Nalgonda district, were food deficit areas. So on top of the profits to be made out of smuggling and out of black-marketing in the towns was a killing to be made in the rural areas themselves. Since the village committees which organized the collection of the levy were composed of a local official and one other local person, the levy collection was biased in one particular direction. An official of the State Government described what happened. Although the particular event described occurred after the incorporation of Hyderabad into India, the process was the same all through the 1940s. The village concerned was being visited by prominent officials who appealed for all surpluses of grain to be given up:

> A fat, pot-bellied gentleman stands up and says that the crop has failed in the village. The produce is not even half that of the previous year. Prices of cloth, iron and steel have gone up. The village grain bank is claiming a share of their produce for the

common pool, in the name of the co-operative movement; therefore, if any grain is taken out of the village it will mean misery and starvation for the villagers. The entire gathering applauds these remarks.

He is followed by other speakers, more vehement in tone, who appeal to the Tehsildar Sahib to open a cheap grain shop in the village and to send some grain to the shop from Taluk Headquarters and to arrange for feeding the poor at least twice a week. When the gathering lustily cheers these demands, the Tehsildar holds quiet consultation with a few of the local leaders and also with the Patel and Patwari. Ultimately he decides that no grain would be procured from the village, provided that the rich agree to look after the poor of the village. Cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai' rent the air, and he is seen off by the crowd which walks behind his cart for more than a mile.

When the gathering reassembles after getting rid of the Tehsildar, the leaders congratulate each other and the gathering for having averted a catastrophe. Twelve hundred maunds of rice and two thousand maunds of jawar from that village are sold on the black market that season. The poor, of course, have to remain content with one meal a day. The Communist Party enrolls thirty members from the village for its fighting squad. [Zahir Ahmed 1965:76-77].

From the other side of the class line the landlords seemed to be rather more aggressive. In 1944 a number of disputes occurred. In Dharmapuram village in Jangaon taluka, the landlord Pusukuri Raghava Rao tried to drive some *lambadis* from 80 acres of dry and 25 acres of wet land. The *lambadis* resisted successfully [Sundarayya 1972:28]. In Malakagudem village Pingli Ranga Reddy expropriated the lands of the Sattayya family on the pretext of loans not being repaid. In this case the villagers banded together, drove away his thugs, and took possession of the harvest, even though 40 people were arrested later [Sundarayya 1972:34].

The Offensive of the Deshmukhs

In general the war, the food crises, and the levy were all used by the *deshmukhs* to once more attack the position of the peasants. As we have seen, the *deshmukhs* and other landlords used their position of power in the villages and the state to escape paying the

levy. Because they usually controlled the village officials they were in a good position to falsify returns. Even if the levy was paid, peasant families and sometimes even the merchants paid more than their fair share, because it was the *deshmukhs* or their agents who were collecting it. This deprived the rich peasants of the fruits of their surpluses and the others of food necessary for their own consumption. Even where regulated markets did exist the middle and poor peasants had to sell all their crop at once to get money for land revenue and debt payments, while the better off could wait until the price rose. Finally, the landlords got around the restriction on the cultivation of commercial crops. However, it was easy to blackmail smaller and weaker peasants who did the same, by using their influence over the local officials as a potent threat.

What further compounded the deteriorating position of the peasants was that in some areas, notably Nalgonda district, food-grains were in deficit. This was partly due to the bad weather conditions of the mid-1940s, but both the cases of landgrabbing mentioned above were from that district and in general Nalgonda appears to have been particularly badly afflicted by rapacious landlords The one foodgrain which was not in deficit was rice, but the basic staples in Telengana were and are jawar, bajra, and gram. Most people cannot afford to eat rice regularly, and the figures for wet land holdings only serve to confirm this. Therefore the good harvest of rice which the government proudly stated as having led to good levy collections in 1944 [*Food Administration Report* 1944: 20], hardly went anywhere to alleviating the situation of the poor and landless. Not that any good harvest of any crop would have done them much good, because as we have seen those with power seized most of it.

What this did trigger was another leap in the rate of indebtedness. We have already seen the effect of the deflationary crisis of the 1930s. The effect of the inflationary crisis of the war was even more severe. The figures for the state as a whole marked an increase of 83% in the period 1939-50 and 199% since 1931 in the 118 surveyed villages. By region the figures were:

Telengana	122%
Marathwada/Karnataka	29%

[Iyengar 1951: 436]

This once again shows a much larger rise for Telengana than for Marathwada and Karnataka, emphasizing the point that the dominant money-lenders of Marathwada were incapable of wringing much more out of theal ready impoverished peasants. In Telengana, on the other hand, partly because there were more peasant owners available to be caught by indebtedness, partly because the *deshmukhs* as landlords were better able to exploit land, and partly because their position of power in the villages made it easier for them to seize land. Because the levy rate for foodgrains was less than the market rate, there was no relief for middle and poor peasants by selling their crops to the government. If they did cut down on their cultivation of commercial crops their income would decrease even further.

The war crisis produced another wave of land seizures—partly through the growth of indebtedness and partly so that the *deshmukhs* could make the most of the conditions produced by the war. The 1949-50 economic survey reported that during the previous 15 years only 7% of the land in the surveyed villages had been transferred. Of that land 82.6% had been transferred by the 'usual legal sale process' and only 14.7% due to debt accumulation [Kesava Iyengar 1951: 112, 124]. The 'usual legal sale process' in Telengana at that time being forcible seizure of land and fixing the records afterwards, there is almost no way of estimating how much land actually changed hands due to brute force and was never recorded as being transferred at all. But let us assume that the figures are correct and that only 7% of the land did change hands. Let us even overlook the manner in which a large proportion of the land was expropriated. For the figures for 'occupancy holdings,' that is, what people owned rather than what they cultivated, reveals that most peasant families in fact possessed precious little land. In addition to that 25% of the dry land and 22% of the wet land was cultivated on tenancy. Landless tenants were 46.6% of the total number of tenants, as against 31% in the 1929-30 survey [Kesava Iyengar 1951: 55]. The landholding figures were:

	Dry land				*Wet land*		
(*acres*)	0-10	10-25	25-50	50+	0-2	2-5	5+
Adilabad	50.0	34.0	11.9	4.1	70.6	22.5	6.9
Hyderabad	66.9	15.3	7.5	10.3	68.1	18.5	13.3

Karimnagar	75.0	18.1	5.0	1.8	79.3	14.6	6.1
Mahbubnagar	50.5	31.2	11.6	6.7	47.0	29.2	23.1
Medak	84.6	11.2	2.7	1.5	76.7	15.4	7.9
Nalgonda	58.4	25.7	9.2	6.8	74.0	16.6	9.4
Nizamabad	89.2	7.8	1.5	1.5	69.2	20.6	10.2
Warangal	61.1	24.3	8.4	6.2	40.7	32.9	26.4

[Kesava Iyengar 1951:40-41]

The 1949-50 economic survey attempted to get an idea of the size of an 'economic' holding sufficient to maintain a peasant family. Most of the respondents were unable to come to a conclusion on this, but they did give estimates of what constituted an 'optimum' holding. This was the best size for a family farm, to be viewed from the angle of making the maximum use of a family's labour. On this definition (which of course was based on the idea of the 'average family' as well), and according to the figures supplied by local respondents, 90.8% of the surveyed holdings in the surveyed villages were below this figure:

	Optimum holding size (acres)		*% sub-optimum*
	Dry land	*Wet land*	
Adilabad	97.0	13.0	97.6
Hyderabad	60.0	7.6	87.6
Karimnagar	33.0	5.9	83.4
Mahbubnagar	55.0	10.0	88.3
Medak	57.5	6.0	95.8
Nalgonda	60.0	7.8	91.2
Nizamabad	53.0	9.4	95.0
Warangal	56.0	10.5	90.3

[Kesava Iyengar 1951:88]

Now as has been said before, these figures may well have been given with an intention to influence the forthcoming land reform legislation. On the other hand, it is quite possible to see them as a measure of rural unemployment, if they do represent the area of land which would absorb the labour of an 'average' family at the contemporary technological level. The Hyderabad Agrarian Reforms

Committee came up with the concept of a 'basic' holding of two acres of wet or 15 acres of dry land. This would be an area which 'just pays the cost of cultivation in a normal year' [Kesava Iyengar 1951:90]. But this would not cover any other burdens that the family would have to bear, let alone providing any way of improving their standard of living, and would not be able to support them in a year when the crops failed. Neither would it be capable of supporting them if there was another slump in agricultural prices. The committee wished to ban the division of holdings below the basic level to deal with the problem of tiny fragmented plots that could not be cultivated properly. But this then came up against the most insuperable problem facing land reform, the *deshmukhs* notwithstanding—there was not enough land, even then, to support every individual peasant family farming as a unit. So in a sense this supports the conclusion of the local respondents to the economic survey. Speaking about India as a whole, the 1951 report stated:

> The chief bottleneck is the non-availability of sufficient arable land: if every cultivating family should get 50 acres of arable land even in the course of 50 years to come, it would require a very good portion of the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea to be reclaimed. Secondly, with more intensive methods and types of cultivation, it is very doubtful how far a cultivating family will be able to manage such a vast area as 50 acres, depending mainly on members of the family and one or two pairs of bullocks. [Kesava Iyengar 1951:92]

In fact these 'bottlenecks' were the inability to accumulate capital for agricultural production and the inability of the industrial sector to develop and absorb the surplus rural population. The situation which was developing was one where independent cultivation was only possible for those with a regular surplus and an ability to apply capital to production. The State Government, for all its promotional activity, was unable to promote a capitalist transformation in the countryside. But these problems were bound up with the experience of imperialism, which will be covered at length in the next chapter.

To sum up, the war both intensified and distorted the basic tendencies of the Hyderabad economy and especially that of Telengana:

**The rapid inflation caused commercial dry-land crops, especially groundnut, to become even more profitable than foodcrops. In Jangaon taluk of Nalgonda district, groundnut fetched an average Rs 48 per acre in the late 1940s as against Rs 6 for jawar.

**The food crisis produced a countervailing tendency to extend the cultivation of food crops. Because the supply situation was critical, peasant families had to plant more food crops, so if they had little or no land their standard of living dropped sharply.

**These scissors, closing in on the majority of peasant families, benefited the *deshmukhs* greatly. Able to make the most of the inflationary conditions by planting what was most profitable, and able to avoid the levy by means of their political domination of the countryside, they could consolidate their position still further. Despite official protestations to the contrary, there can be no doubt that they expropriated significant amounts of land during the war. Given the amount of land concentration that had already taken place, even the 7% of land recorded as being transferred in the period 1939-50 would have represented a much greater proportion for the people from whom it was taken. This is shown by the increase in landless tenants, which as was shown earlier were drawn mainly from Telengana.

**In Telengana there was a peasantry which had been hit by two severe crises in fifteen years, one deflationary, one inflationary. The numbers of landless had been substantially increased by the *deshmukhs* using these favourable conditions to seize land. The rich peasants saw, on the one hand, a considerable proportion of their surplus production being removed by the levy, and on the other, that the access to capital that they required to develop was blocked by the relation of the *deshmukhs* to the state—if there was any available for rural development, the *deshmukhs* ensured that in general they recieved it. These conditions were not 'worse' than in other parts of India. What was different was the political reactions to the situation.

PART TWO

Dreams—Hyderabad Before 1945

4 The Colonial State

The Hyderabad State differed from the rest of the Indian princely states in that it retained its original ruling class during the British conquest of India. Practically all of the rest of the states were British creations or like Mysore, had been re-established with a new, pliant dynasty. Hyderabad escaped this fate because of its early adherence to the British cause in India which the Asaf Jahi[4] dynasty never abandoned despite occasional differences of opinion. In 1857 the Nizam's government resolutely suppressed anti-British movements in the state, which played a large part in preventing any spread of the Mutiny to the Deccan.

There was of course a price for survival—subservience. The first treaty with the East India Company was in 1761, and by 1766 the coastal Andhra provinces were ceded to the British. Although the Nizam gained fresh territory from participating in the wars against the state of Mysore in the 1790s, under a new treaty with the British in 1800 all these were ceded to the British, to pay for a permanent force of 9,000 British troops which was to be stationed on his territory—eventually in the Secunderabad Cantonment, just to the north of Hyderabad city [*Imperial Gazetteer* 1909:16]. In 1853, to make up for the non-payment for the upkeep of the troops the province of Berar as well as the districts of Osmanabad and Raichur, were taken over by the British. In 1860 the last two were returned as a reward for the loyalty of 1857.

However, the government was still supervised by the British through the resident at Secunderabad, and more directly through a

[4]The independent sultanates of the Deccan had been conquered by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1659-1707) in over twenty years of campaigning. This war put great strains on the Mughal administration and central control began to disintegrate after Aurangzeb's death. Hyderabad had been part of the sultanate of Golconda, which had its own Muslim nobility, many of Irani origin. In 1723 the Imperial governor Asaf Jahi effectively rebelled, although he continued to formally proclaim his loyalty to the Emperor Muhammed Shah while behaving as he pleased. It was the succession struggle after his death in 1748 which was the occasion for French and British involvement in Hyderabad, coinciding as it did with a European war.

number of Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers who were assigned to the administration, some becoming ministers. The Hyderabad government, despite the honorific title of 'Faithful Ally', could make no major decision without the agreement of the Government of India. Indeed, the principles of British Paramountancy over the Indian states enunciated by the then Viceroy, Lord Minto, at Udaipur on 3rd November 1909, appplied as much to Hyderabad as it did to one of the miniscule Kathiawar states consisting of only a few acres:

> Our policy is, with rare exceptions, one of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Native States. But in guaranteeing their internal independence and in undertaking their protection against external aggression, it naturally follows that the Imperial government has assumed a certain degree of responsibility for the general soundness of their administration and would not consent to incur the reproach of being an indirect agent of misrule. There are also certain matters in which it is necessary for the Government of India to safeguard the interests of the community as a whole, as well as those of the Paramount Power . . . the relationship of the Supreme Government to the states is one of suzerainty. [Indian States Committee 1929:19].

Nevertheless the Hyderabad ruling class was different from those in the other princely states. Unlike the rest of them, Hyderabad was more like a protectorate as the ruling class were not puppets installed by the British. This is important because the indigenous ruling class in such situations is not simply a front for the imperial power but retains, in some degree, its own interests and aspirations, and also to a limited extent its own ability to survive the imperial power—Egypt between the 1880s and 1940s, for instance.

On the other hand, imperialism and the international expansion of capitalism integrated certain branches of the ruled country with the international market. In the case of Hyderabad this would include the cotton-growing areas of Marathwada in the nineteenth century and the castor and later groundnut growing sector of the Telengana rural economy from the turn of the century. Generally speaking, in these instances non-capitalist forms of production—peasant farms, often turning into pure producers of commodities (Marx's simple commodity producers), or landlords of all types,

are actively moulded by capital for its own benefit. Once this occurs these forms of production have no independent existence of their own. Although they may *appear* to be the same as pre-capitalist forms of production and especially of exploitation (*e.g.* forced labour, illegal exactions, landlordism), in *reality* they only exist in their relationship to capital.[5]

The greater and more central the incorporation into the world market became the less and less realistic became the 'feudalist' tag hung on the regime by nationalists and communists alike.

Preparing for British Withdrawal

In 1919 a series of constitutional reforms, known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms after the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy responsible for them, were approved by the British Parliament. They followed a period of nationalist agitation, the 'Home Rule Movement,' which as the name implies drew heavily on the experience of the Irish Home Rule Movement. The main changes were the introduction in the provinces of British India of a form of government known as 'dyarchy.' Three of the ministers in the provincial government were to be chosen from an enlarged elected assembly, instead of them all being appointed civil servants. This was opposed by the Indian National Congress, which wanted total responsible government, and resulted in the Non-Cooperation Campaign of 1920-22, the first time that Gandhi controlled a Congress campaign. As part of the reforms a Chamber of Princes, a purely advisory and consultative body, was set up in 1921. The Nizam of Hyderabad ignored it.

What the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms implicity recognized and what the strength of the Non-Cooperation Movement confirmed,

[5]This type of situation appears in many different forms all over the world, from the latifundia of South America to West German 'peasants' operating under the Common Market's Common Agricultural Policy. What they share is that while their particular relations of production may not themselves be capitalist, it is impossible to now see them existing in isolation from the capitalist economy. In other words they have moved from being people who engaged in commodity production to being people for whom commodity relations is necessary for their own reproduction—that is, ties with the market come to dominate and gradually supersede all others [For a discussion of this and other points, see Friedman 1980]. From what occured after 1930 it is clear that the economy of Telengana was rapidly moving towards such 'commonditization.'

was that for the first time some form of independence for India was on the political agenda. It might be a long time coming, but from now on everything was done with reference to it. From this time dates the attempt of the Hyderabad government to take its own path. That is why the Nizam refused to have anything to do with the Chamber of Princes, which was mainly composed of a number of small states that had been created by the British. A more serious action was the attempt to regain the ceded districts of Berar in 1925, which were part of an attempt to overthrow Minto's dictum and to assert that the relationship between Hyderabad and Britain was that of equal allies. This was firmly slapped down by the Viceroy, Lord Reading, in a letter of 27 March 1926:

> The Sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India, and therefore no Ruler of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing. Its Supremacy is not based only on treaties and engagements but exists independently of them and, quite apart from its prerogative in matters relating to foreign affairs and policies, it is the right and duty of the British Government, while scrupulously respecting all treaties and engagements with the Indian states, to preserve peace and good order throughout India. [Indian States Committee 1929:18].

Although it was so severely put down, the Hyderabad ruling class did not confine itself to legal wrangling in the search for an independent existence. Certain sections of the ruling class especially in the state bureaucracy, attempted what is now known in political jargon as 'modernisation'—in other words, they attempted to introduce capitalism into Hyderabad on a systematic basis. We have already seen some of their activities in the agricultural sector. What was much more remarkable was some of the initiatives taken to build up the industrial sector.

State Initiatives in Industry

As in the rest of India artisan production ('cottage industries') had suffered a calamitous decline in the Nineteenth Century, so much so that an official report of 1933 could state:

They are sunk in ignorance and poverty. They have taken to drink also and this bad habit has told on their health and also on their work. They are devoid of any ambition to better their lot. They are too sluggish and conservative and are losing ground daily. [*Hand Loom Weaving Report* 1933:71].

This patronizing piece of cant did however report but not understand the real situation:

> The whole industry is in the grip of the greedy sowcars or money-lenders or yarn dealers. [*Hand Loom Weaving Report* 1933:72].

One of the main effects of British rule had been to violently distort Indian economic development after the end of the Eighteenth Century. Sometimes this actually was done with violence, as in Bengal after the conquest of Clive in 1757. More often it was done by a combination of the power of the state through legislation and the great weight of British capital. The result was that Indian capitalism never got off the ground. One problem was that in many areas agriculture was thrown back into the hands of rent-receivers, as there was no opportunity for the greater part of any agricultural surplus to be used for the accumulation of capital. This was a problem which faced the bureaucratic modernizers in the Hyderabad State Government. The domination of imperialism produced the conditions in which absentee landlords who rack-rented to increase the own luxury consumption flourished.

On the other hand even the available surplus which could have been used for capital accumulation could not be fully used. As one study [Bagchi 1971] showed, the British government and British firms combined to hinder the development of Indian firms. One very straightforward example: the Government of India was the major purchaser of iron and steel goods. Because it would not purchase items above a very small size in India, it was quite impossible for an Indian iron and steel plant to survive. Only when these regulations were revoked in the 1890s could one be started with any real chance of success.

As Bagchi's book shows, the Indian economy came to be used to support Britain's. Since India had a trade surplus with every other industrial country, the foreign currency surpluses were used to bolster the position of the pound in the international money

markets. India's trade relations were manipulated with the same purpose. In 1927 the Government of India revalued the rupee upwards by 12½%, which meant that Indian exports became dearer on the world market. Again, fifteen months after Britain came off the Gold Standard in September 1931 1,053 million rupees worth of gold were exported from Bombay alone [Bose 1942:267]. The Government of India made no attempt to stem this flow, not surprisingly, because a great deal of the gold ended up in London. Under the Ottawa Agreement of 1932 the scheme of Empire Preference (in trade) meant that India had to give Britain preference on 26 per cent of her imports. In these cases as in all others, the interests of the Paramount power were paramount.

In spite of these problems some industries had been established in Hyderabad before the state took an active interest in promoting economic development. The most important of these was coal mining, carried out primarily at Singareni in Warangal district, starting in 1889. The company took control of the later fields at Sati (1916), Kothagudem (1937), and Tandur (1941). In November 1944 the government took over the company, although the running was entrusted to a firm of managing agents. Additionally there were eight more coal-bearing areas of the state which were not exploited. In 1939 there were 11,960 workers employed in the three mines then being worked—this rose to 19,322 in 1946 following an increase in production in the war [*Industries in Hyderabad* 1952:42-43, 128-132].

The one Indian industry which did escape annihilation by the British was textiles, especially in the cotton-growing areas of west India. In Hyderabad the first large-scale mill was set up in 1875, quickly followed by two others (the M.S.K. Mill in Gulbarga, the Aurangabad Mill, and the Hyderabad Spinning and Weaving Mills). With the boom in textiles following the end of the First World War, the D.B. Ramgopal Mills were set up in Hyderabad in 1922, and later the Osmanshahi Mills in Nanded in 1925 and the Azamjahi Mills in Warangal in 1934 [*Industries in Hyderabad* 1952:76]. These were all large-scale factories employing large numbers of workers:

D.B. Ramgopal Mills	1,328
Hyderabad S & W Mills	408
Azamjahi Mills	2,284
Aurangabad Mills	1,013

Osmanshahi Mills	2,188
M.S.K. Mills	3,322

[*Statistical Year Book* 1941:1016]

Nevertheless in 1945 the consumption of cotton by the mills was about 68,000 bales per year as against production of 251,219 bales in 945-46, which itself was well below that of previous years. But by this time cotton textiles was not the base for capitalist expansion that it had been in the Nineteenth Century. In Britain the vanguard of capitalist development was now occupied by industries such as light engineering and chemicals. Therefore the development of textiles by itself could not suffice to pull Indian capitalism up to parity with metropolitan capitalism.

Apart from the textile mills and the coal mines, the other main industrial units established before the 1930s had been the Nizam State Railway, the Shahabad Cement Company, and the Vazir Sultan Tobacco factory. The first railway had been opened in 1874 with government money and in 1886 the management was transferred to the Nizam's Guaranteed State Railway Co. This was bought out by the government in 1930 and then run as a government department. It was very profitable and formed one of the main sources of revenue. The cement company was formed in 1926 with the aid of the Tata Industrial Bank. Vazir Sultan was a local company, using locally grown tobacco, but in 1930 pressure from Imperial Tobacco resulted in a merger with minority Hyderabad government participation.

Most of the initiative for the establishment of industries had come from the government or from outside the state. Especially after the boom in export crops, those with spare money would put it into land where there was a guaranteed quick return. More often than not the landlords were not interested in anything else except expanding their personal cousumption. To ensure that, they could manipulate the half-yearly variation in the exchange rate between the Hyderabad and British Indian rupees [*Hyderabad Banking Enquiry Report* 1930:54].

Part of Hyderabad's semi-autonomy was that it had a separate currency. Now most of the exports of crops from Hyderabad to British India and beyond occurred after the monsoon season. At this time merchants and agents coming up from British India required Hyderabad (OS) rupees with which to purchase the crops.

Therefore the value of the OS rupees rose against the British India (BG) rupee. So merchants and money-lenders would convert as many BG rupees as possible into OS rupees prior to the monsoon so as to be able to make the biggest killing when the rate rose in the export season. Since this gave a guaranteed return of 2-3% a very large amount of the surplus of the rural production was used up in this way. The report complained:

> This sure and easy profit on exchange prevents the development of the banking habit and the utilisation of the savings in productive enterprise. Instead of the savings being invested in industries or commerce they lie idle and at the same time earn a small interest. [*Hyderabad Banking Enquiry Report* 1933:54]

Apart from small-scale units for processing oilseeds or milling rice, very little of the surplus found its way outside the circle of land accumulation, currency speculation and personal consumption. This situation set the scene for the intervention of the state.

Although a Department of Commerce and Industries had been in existence since 1916 the first venture into direct management did not come until 1930 when the government bought out the railway company. This was in fact just implementing a long standing agreement four years early. The railway was vital to the economy of the state, being the only means of bulk transportation. As such it was essential to the export of the crops on which that economy depended. The cotton was mainly sent west to Bombay, while most of the oil seeds went to Vijayawada (then known as Bezwada) in Madras Presidency.

The Hyderabad State followed the usual pattern of Indian administration and its main source of revenue until almost the very end came from land revenue. This was not a tax on income, but a levy on the amount of crops produced. What was unusual was that until almost the very end the State Government balanced its budget with ease. This was made possible by the budgetary system introduced by the Finance Minister Akbar Hydari in 1921. Government departments made estimates of their income over the next three years and then drew up their plans for expenditure within those limits. An unspent surplus at the end of the period was then divided up between the executive departments and the Finance Department. The surpluses were used to finance various reserves (Famine Reserve, Paper

Currency Reserve, Debt Redemption Reserve, etc.) which were used to shore up financial stability and avoid emergency taxation. The system encouraged departments to economize, since they got the benefit of the unspent surplus to use on some pet project. This extremely orthodox system worked well enough in the deflationary period up to World War II, but the wartime inflation wrecked it. Prices went up so fast that the triennial predictions were obsolete long before the period was up. On the other hand revenue, coming mainly from fixed rate items like land revenue and excise did not keep pace with inflation:

Main items of Hyderabad State Government Revenue ('000,000 Rs).

	Land Rev	*Customs*	*Excise*	*Railways*	*Total*
1922-23	272.84	131.47	146.94	30.54	713.50
1927-28	323.08	154.77	164.32	37.12	841.59
1932-33	309.43	102.54	158.44	38.88	806.18
1937-38	309.69	115.17	187.51	122.68	939.36
1942- 3	326.21	143.36	245.28	173.33	1,233.54
1947-48	341.87	200.58	561.00	160.25	2,099.38

[Review of Hyderabad Finance 1951:67-81]

Land revenue declined from 38.4% of revenue in 1922-23 to 17% in 1947-48, customs from 18.5% to 10%. while excise increased from 20.6% to 28%. Railways only appeared to have had a modest increase from 4.3% to 8%, but the 1942-43 figure was 14.1%, and the 1947-48 figure was undoubtedly affected by the dislocation of trade during the independence dispute with India. The small growth in the receipts from land revenue during the war, a period of rapid inflation, must have meant a diminishing load on the large cultivators and consequently larger retained surpluses, while the increase in excise receipts were obviously a result of inflation. In all events, the tax load must have diminished during this period as far as landlords were concerned, while it would probably have increased for the poor, who were most affected by the excise duty on alcohol.

Perversely, the feat of balancing the budget through the Depression had meant that the State Government did have resources to intervene in the economy at a time when the preoccupation of most other governments was to cut their expenditure on all fronts.

The Industrial Trust Fund

The Industrial Trust Fund, set up in March 1929, was in several ways unique. It was the first state institution in India to give direct assistance to Industries. Although it was formally an independent body, for all practical purposes it was a government department (its income was exempt from taxation). It was managed by a Board of Trustees comprising five government ministers. Its prime purpose was to aid large industries within the state by putting up share capital [Jussawalla 1961: 183-185].

Some of the earliest activities were actually in the field of artisan production. From 1930 a Government Carpet Factory was operating in Warangal, a traditional centre of carpet production. An institute set up in 1931 at Paithan saved the local gold braid industry from extinction, while the Himroo[6] weavers were shored up by a large loan. These were only sidelines, however, compared to the ITF's involvement in large-scale industry.

Although the ITF was intended to be only a finance corporation, soon after its foundation it was pushed into managing an ever-widening range of factories. In 1933 the Osmanshahi Mills were shut by the managing agents. The closure of one of the few major industrial units in Hyderabad would have had such a serious effect on the economy that the cabinet wese persuaded by them to let the ITF buy out the managing agents and appoint their own. This was the first occasion that this had happened.[7]

The managing agency was a feature of capitalism peculiar to India. Instead of a company having its own management it hired it out to a firm of professional managers. Apart from this primary function the managing agents branched out into marketing, raw-material purchasing and extraction, the import-export trade and banking. What happened was that they went beyond simply managing other peoples' firms. They put in a lot of capital themselves and as they extended their activities, created large integrated capitalist groups covering every stage of production, from the extraction of raw materials to marketing and export.

[6]Himroo—a traditional form of weaving cotton and silk. Previously used for clothing. in the twentieth century it was mainly used for tapestries.

[7]The others were: Azamjahi Mills and Osmanshahi Mills 1933; the Nizam Sugar Mills; Praga Tools Corp 1948; the Sirpur Paper Mills, Sirsilk, Singareni Collieries, Taj Glass Works 1949; and the Hyderabad Asbestos Cement Co 1952.

Managing agents in Hyderabad generally lacked these facilities, however, so they were always short of capital, and that is where the ITF came in to inject the necessary capital, as we saw before when considering the Nizam Sugar Factory at Bodhan. Apart from investments, the ITF also baled out firms by means of loans, which was not one of the original intentions [Jussawalla 1961:191]. Almost nothing was ever repaid. The usual pattern was something like this:

> Invariably, some prominent businessmen was behind a scheme and the Industrial Trust Fund only financed his scheme. Such persons were later appointed as managing agents and only when the managing agency became ineffective and inefficient, and the concerns got into financial embarrassment, the Fund took over.

A government official was usually appointed as a director when the ITF acquired a large interest in a firm, but often:

> . . . the same Government official was director of ten or more concerns engaged in diverse industries of a highly technical nature. The result was that he was a helpless spectator to the questionable activities of the unscrupulous persons who managed the concerns. It is doubtful if even in one of the concerns, in which the Fund acquired interests, there were any Technical Directors appointed by the Fund [Jussawalla 1961:193].

In fact the capitalists in Hyderabad never emerged as a real class. The imperialist transformation of the Indian economy had lead to the situation where most of the people who started factories in Hyderabad were merchants and/or speculators out for a very quick and very high return on capital. As was mentioned before, the branchs of industry which now produced the highest returns (*e.g.* chemicals, precision engineering) did not develop on a general scale. In these circumstances a quick and high return on capital meant bankrupting the firms. For those with the right bureaucratic connections there was the built-in safety net of the ITF, so in most cases there was very little attempt at any long-term investment. The ITF as a purely finance corporation was incapable of controlling the people who it assisted or of itself directing their investments. What it did do was emphasize how any development was dependent on the state, and by giving assistance encouraged the establishment

of a range of factories which otherwise would not have existed.

Apart from the companies of which it eventually acquired the managing agency, between 1942 and 1945 the ITF bought shares in a machine-tools factory, two chemical works, a tin works, a porcelain and enamel works, and a marble-quarrying company. In addition, loans were given to firms engaged in the production of buttons, flour, dairy products, oils, electro-plating machinery, paints, paper, printing, weaving, and cotton ginning [*Industrial Statistics* 1940-45:34]. The government also ran Deccan Airways and as previously stated bought out the Singareni coal mines in 1944.

The point of giving this list is to indicate how all-pervasive were the activities of the ITF and the State Government. They needed to be because the indigenous private capitalists proved to be quite incapable of building a capitalist industrial sector on their own. The more imaginative of them developed close links with the State Government so that for many practical purposes they were government agents. Notable amongst these was Mir Laik Ali of the Hyderabad Construction Company who became the last Prime Minister of the independent Hyderabad State. The problem was that they were also acting for themselves as individuals so that overall development was undirected and un-co-ordinated and the government was still giving away money with precious little control over how it would be used.

Despite these the interventionist wing of the Hyderabad bureaucracy continued to grow in confidence and influence. In 1939 the government sponsored the establishment of the State Bank of Haderabad, and subscribed 50% of the shares. This was done in spite of the recommendations of a leading British bank official that such a move was both unnecessary and unwise [*Fitzpatrick Memorandum* 1938:64]. What really gave a boost to the interventionist faction were the effects of World War II. As we saw before, the state was eventually forced to intervene to regulate food prices. This meant that it was compelled to attempt to regulate the agricultural sector, which was the largest part of the Hyderabad economy. The experience of state interventionism both in Hyderabad and in the world generally had a great effect on the bureaucracy. It also made state intervention more acceptable to the ruling class generally.

A unique and rather extreme example of this is a memorandum

from the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, quite a senior official, to the Post-War Planning Sub-Committee on 24 April 1944. That there should be such a committee in the first place is indicative of the extent that interventionism had permeated the bureaucracy and the RCS's note shows how the ruling class was being influenced by the dominant ideas of the rest of the world. He said:

> . . . there is no doubt that with the present system of agricultural production there is hardly any chance of appreciable improvement in the national wealth of the country. But when agricultural improvement is under consideration one cannot overlook the miserable backwardness of the country in industry. . . . Though I would very much like to recommend such proposals as would suggest immediate introduction of collective farming, etc. I cannot do it for the simple reason that the industrial backwardness of the country will make them Utopian.

The answer lay in co-operation:

> At the very outset I make it absolutely clear that co-operation has to form the very basis of the rural economy of Hyderabad. I have a firm faith that the next stage of development of these sample productive associations will be the collective farming associations.

There was the problems of the moneylenders:

> I fully appreciate the value of the cooperation of the local sahukars, if only we are able to make them cooperate. Voluntarily they will never come in. I would therefore suggest that not only in the case of the consolidated members but also in the cases of other cultivators we must have some legal protection to save them from falling into the clutches of the sahukars.

Progress was, however, natural if not inevitable:

> Once we socialise credit, supply of seeds and manure, improvement and supply of cattle and marketing of produce, we shall have prepared ground to induce cultivators to take up collective farming. The collective farming therefore should be the natural stage of progress of the unit after the initial difficulties of general

> illiteracy, poverty, and ignorance of the benefits of collective efforts are overcome and the cultivators in a unit are socialised in some aspects of agriculture.

As a start a few State Collective Farms should be set up on the basis of the Russian 'Artel' (where land, animals, implements, etc., were pooled, and then production drawn on the basis of the resources contributed and the labour performed). It ended with another plea for integrated development:

> I however again emphasise that even the State Collective Farms will not be of any help if the fertilizers, the tractors and the other machinery required are not to be imported from outside. Large scale farming can appeal to our countrymen only when it can pay well and it is doubtful if it can pay well when all the machinery has to be imported from outside at high cost. This again brings us back to the old agreement that industrialisation should precede any radical changes in agriculture. [Co-operative Dept File 3/11 1953]

Leaving aside the stange spectacle of an official of an Indian princely state engaging in rhetoric similar to that current in the British Labour Party at the same time, that is a striking example of the success of Keynsian economic ideas in penetrating the ruling class in all parts of the capitalist world. What is striking is that firstly he recognized the need for state intervention and secondly that he ignored the problems of the ruling class itself—the landlords. There was no mention at all of the role of the *jagirdars* and *deshmukhs* in the new Hyderabad, and also he neglected to mention just where the surplus for industrialisation was to come from if agriculture was to be transformed after industry. It was this contradiction that riddled the definitve statement of the Hyderabad bureaucracy—the Hyderabad Five-Year Plan of 1945.

The Five-Year Plan

This remarkable document, the product of the deliberations of 15 committees, was the short-lived victory of the interventionist (or, perhaps, the state capitalist) faction of the Hyderabad ruling class. As the introduction put it:

While recognising the important contribution made by private initiative and enterprise in building up the chief industries of the State, it was, however, deemed advantageous to plan future industries or expand the extisting ones under a System of State Control. It is no doubt true that the immotive power of profit supplied the necessary driving power for the speedy expansion of trade, industry and commerce in the past, but in a scheme of planned economy where it is the economic welfare of the people as a whole that is the primary aim, a balance between supply and demand, agriculture and industry, is the first prequistite. Hence, all planned development should generally take place under the aegis of Government and sluggish acquisitiveness which tends to be the distinguishing feature of unchecked private enterprise must give place to those impulses which have their seat in patriotic sentiment. [Five-Year Plan 1945:vii]

The 108 different projects covered, apart from agriculture and industry, the full range of activities of the modern state: health, education, communications and most ambitious of all, the plan for an industrial new town at the village of Ramagudem in Adilabad district. This was intended to be the centre of a regional development plan on the lines of the Tennessee Valley Authority. It was to use local, limestone and iron ore, with hydro-electric power from works on the Godavari and 370 miles of canals to irrigate 371,000 acres [Five-Year Plan 1945:xv]. This part of the plan was largely the work of Colonel E.W. Slaughter, the manager of the Nizam State Railway, and like the rest of plan it never saw the light of day.

The major flaw, enough in itself to break the plan, was evident in the section where finance was discussed. The plan began with a fine flow of rhetoric:

> If Hyderabad is to adapt itself to the new order that is being heralded throughout the world as a result of the war, the existing social structure must inevitably change and emphasis be shifted from agriculture to agriculture-cum-industry as the bedrock of State Finance. [Five-Year Plan 1945:xxiv]

It then launched into a full-scale Keynsian statement. For some reason the year 1944—

> . . . carried in its wake the implications of not only work for all but also the continuous full productivity of the economic machine and the abolition of the spectre of periodic depression which has haunted mankind for years. That the State and only the State can create conditions in which productivity and the standard of living will continuously rise, has come to be accepted to an ever increasing degree. [Five-Year Plan 1945:xvv]

The problem was how was this to be financed. The plan estimated that the cost over a ten year period would be between Rs 250-260 crores (One crore=ten million). This would certainly have turned out to be a considerable under-estimate, given post-war inflation, had the plan ever been carried out. To raise funds for development the Finance Committee suggested the introduction of an Income Tax, a Surcharge, and Corporation Tax at half the rate appertaining in British India. In addition they suggested that a Sales Tax and a General Property Tax could be levied. What they did not propose was the levying of an Agricultural Income Tax, nor did they think it possible to bring the *jagirdars,* who as grantees of 35% of the land of Hyderabad paid no land revenve at all, into the system ". . . since various difficulties precluded such a practice being adopted in the very near future." [Five-Year Plan 1945:xxvii]

This was the nub of the whole problem. The agricultural sector, and therefore the *jagirdars* and *deshmukhs*, were still the largest part of the economy. The government revenues still came largely from that sector through land revenue, customs (mainly on crop exports) and excise. The autocratic state still rested on the landlords, and so the State Government and the state capitalist faction of the ruling class in the bureaucracy was faced with a terrible contradiction. Because of the late development of capitalism in India, the branches of production which brought the highest return to capital were 'unproductive' currency speculation and construction (all Hyderabadi businesses were hopelessly over-capitalized in buildings), rather than industrial investment The state recoiled from taking effective measures to remedy this either by taxation, or land reform, or by mainpulating the terms of trade; because the *deshmukhs* and the *jagirdars* were the major social base of the state. The *deshmukhs* and *jagirdars* would have had to be disciplined and the state was not prepared to perform that shift in its social base.

Some, like the RCS, tried to cover this up by pretending that industry could develop in isolation from the agricultural sector. Others, like the authors of the plan, just made their plans and hoped for the best. The weakness of this strategy was shown by the way in which it was submerged in the political crisis of 1946-48.

5 The Appearance of Indian Nationalism in Hyderabad

Thus far we have concentrated on the developments in the economy of the Hyderabad State. The politics of the state were built on a combination of this economy, autocracy, and religious communalism.

The Hyderabad State, as was mentioned before, was an agglomeration of territories carved out by Asaf Jah, Mughal subedar of the Deccan, from the collapsing empire. His successors continued this policy by means of an alliance with the invading British after 1749. The state ended up with four major languages, half a dozen major ethnic groups, ultimately a destructive communal problem. The sixth Nizam was determined to maintain his rule come what may in the rest of India. The dynasty eventually turned to those people who appeared to have origins the same as its own—the urban Muslim community. Economically tied to the dynasty and regime it was no hard task to organize urban Muslims from the petit-bourgeoisic to fight for the regime—especially if the only alternative appeared to be unemployment and impoverishment.

	Language Statistics 1941
Telugu	7,529,229
Marathi	3,947,089
Urdu	2,187,005
Kannada	1,724,180
Lambadi	418,753

[Census of India 1941, Hyderabad Vol II:640-642]

The Muslim community of the Deccan had its origin in the conquest of the area by the Sultans of Delhi in the Fourteenth Century, followed by the rule of the successor states, known collectively as the Deccan Sultanates. In their turn these states were conquered at the end of the Seventeenth Century by the Mughal Empire. One of these sultanates had been centred on Golconda, a few miles from modern Hyderabad. These Muslim rulers, of

Turkish extraction themselves, brought with them a largely but nor exclusively Muslim court[8] and bureaucracy with them, and supplemented these from time to time with immigrants from other parts of the Islamic world. The two main sources were from Central Asia but more importantly in the case of the Deccan, Iran. This was partly due to some of the rulers of the Deccan Sultanates following the Shi'a branch of Islam as did Iran. The Asaf Jahis adhered to the majority Sunni branch but the links with Iran have remained to this day.

Not all the Muslims in Hyderabad were immigrants of the noble, bureaucratic or scholarly classes. The majority were in fact the descendents of converts, some made in the early years of Muslim rulers in north India who came south in the train of invading armies, or were converts made after the conquest of the Deccan. Islam is a proselytising religion and these activities continued spasmodically down into the Twentieth Century, when they became one element in communal conflict. The urban Muslim community was predominantly a typical petit-bourgeois group—apart from providing the majority of state officials, they also dominated the law and education.

After the 1919 reforms, it became clear that the British were resigned to eventually leaving India. From that time the dynasty bagan to emphasize its 'Muslim' character and to recruit a larger and larger proportion of Muslims to its bureaucracy [Prasad interview 1979]. The official languages of the state were Urdu and English, the medium of instruction in schools and colleges run by the State was Urdu, and in fact the 'character' of the state was projected as being that of the dynasty and the one true Hyderabadi community—the Muslims. This ideology so pervaded the Muslim community that it was possible for a neo-fascist party to take power based on it during the final crisis of the Hyderabad State. Towards the end, assailed by charges of communalism, the state tried to turn these back on their opponents by promoting the image of Hyderabad as a cosmopolitan culture. But this only existed at all in Hyderabad city and there it was founded on the domination of

[8]All the dynasties, including the Asaf Jahis, recruited on a wide scale from Hindu aristocrats. The point is that the dominant and universal culture of the entire Indian aristocracy was that of Persia, which in India was exclusively a court and administrative culture which set them apart from the mass of the population.

Urdu as a language, Islam as a culture, and the Asaf Jahis as a dynasty.

In was the suppression of the languages and cultures of the majority of the population that prompted the establishment of organisations which spawned the nationalist movement in Hyderabad. In 1921, when the Non-Cooperation Movement was at its height in British India, some collections were made for the Congress and a number of establishments operating *charkhas* (hand-driven spinning-wheels espoused by Gandhi) were opened. The Khilafat Day (organized by the Kailafat Movement, a Congress supported Muslim organisation protesting at the overthrow of the Turkish Sultan by the victorious Allies) was observed in the main towns in March and April 1920, but this was not dangerous to the regime as the Nizam himself had interceded on behalf of the Sultan. What really started the movement towards nationalism was the atmosphere of cultural chauvinism:

> It was 1922. A Hindu social reform conference was held at the Viveka Vardhini Theatre where all the speeches were in Urdu and Marathi. Only one speaker tried to speak in Telugu, but he was hooted and shouted down. The number of Maharashtrians in Hyderabad city was small, yet they established their superiority in all walks of life. Telugu language did not get any respect and recognition. . . . A few elders, having seen the insults to Telugu and the speaker in that meeting, established the Andhra Jana Sangham with the objective of securing a proper place for Telugu language and culture in Hyderabad city. [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:11].

That the Maharashtrians were more confident than the Andhras is not really surprising. As we saw before, until the introduction of groundnut in the mid-1920s Marathwada was economically stronger than Telengana by virtue of producing cotton. Additionally Maharashtra was the nation which had been the last great Indian power. The Maratha princes had ruled half of India in 1760 and had only been finally defeated by the British in 1818. In contrast, there had been no independent power of the Andhra people since the Rajas of Warangal in the Fourteenth Century. The demoralisation of the Telugu-speaking intelligentsia had reached the point at which in the 1940s they were still speaking Urdu

in conversation with each other. [Prasad interview 1979]

Nevertheless there were substantial numbers of petit-bourgeois in Telengana, lawyers, village officials, aspiring rich peasants who packed off their sons to get an education, and these people soon began to dominate the activites of the Andhra Jana Sangham, even though it had been established by utra-conservative notables, worried about their social position with the dynasty emphasizing its 'Muslim' nature. The first secretary was a man called Madapati Hanumantha Rao, a central figure in national politics for the next twenty years.

At first the Jana Sangham (roughly translatable as People's Organisation) only covered Hyderabad city. Hanumantha Rao, however, encouraged local organisations, and in April 1924 it was possible to form a state-wide organisation the Andhra Kendhra Jana Sangham. The activities were aimed at the needs of the aspiring petit-bourgeoisie—assaistance was given to students and libraries were opened all over Telengana—100 in the first 12 years [*Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* Vol IV 1966:44]. They published a total of 12 cheap Telugu booklets, such as one entitled the *Freedom of Merchants*. This referred to the activities of government officers while on tour, who expected to be supplied things free of charge. Local merchants associations were set up to organize the merchants. Ravi Narayan Reddy recounts how the police tried to stop a meeting of the association in his own village. They were unsuccessful, but the merchants who took part were terrified [Ravi Narayan Reddy interview 1974]. In organizing around this kind of issue the Jana Sangham was going beyond a purely cultural movement, and so in March 1930 a new organisation, the Andhra Mahasabha, held its first conference at Jogipet. In fact the organizers were the same people who had been behind the success of the Jana Sangham, including the ubiquitous Hanumantha Rao.

The resolutions passed at this first conference concerned insufficient *taccavi* (government cultivation) loans, support for Ayurvedic and Unani (traditional Hindu and Muslim) medicine, elections for municipalities, facilities for women's educations, and the elimination of purdah. The second conference was held at Devakonda (Nalgonda district) in 1931, and the district venue shows that it was under the control of the petit-bourgeois of rural origin, rather than the notables of Hyderabad city. However, the hostility of the police to any kind of activity, no matter how diluted, that had forced a

group of nationalists from Marathwada to hold their meetings outside the state, struck at the Andhra Mahasabha. They were unable to hold another conference until 1934.

In the meantime India had gone through the Congress 1930-32 Civil Disobediance Campaign. Although there was practically no activity in Hyderabad itself, a number of young men from Telengana, including Ravi Narayan Reddy, went to the Andhra coastal districts of Madras Presidency and participated in the movement there. They returned and much influenced politics, some of them by Nehru's concept of socialism, which at that time was favourable towards the Soviet Union [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:6]. So when Gandhi formed an organisation to improve the social conditions of untouchables, the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, this group formed a branch in Hyderabad. Its achievements were negligible, but its importance lies in the penetration of Congress ideas into the petit-bourgeoisie and rich peasants (like Ravi Narayan Reddy) who were the mainstay of the Andhra Mahasabha.

At the 1934 conference some of the resolutions reflected the growing irrigation of the newly radicalized petit-bourgeois at the Hyderabad regime. They included demands for reduced land revenue rates, the abolition of *vetti,* and the introduction of Telugu into local courts, all of which threatened the interests of various sections of the Hyderabad ruling class. These demands did not only attract the ire of the Hyderabad government but also from those elements in the Mahasabha who wished only to be allowed to collaborate with the regime and saw the Mahasabha as a vehicle for getting their views heard. So when the district officer demanded to be shown the resolutions in advance and to have the right to veto discussions, the leadership capitulated [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:13]. The Mahasabha continued to meet annually, with little development in the politics of the organisation except for a brief outbreak of linguistic nationalism. At the 1935 conference at Sircilla a motion was passed specifying that the Mahasabha could only be addressed in Telugu. This effectively prevented supporters from other parts of Hyderabad speaking, and it was reversed at the 1937 conference. The potential conflict between the would-be collaborators and the radicals was not decided until the seventh conference. This was not held until 1940, and the events in between were crucial for the future of the Hyderabad State. Then the Andhra Mahasabha was

faced by an organisation formed specifically to ensure 'Muslim' domination of the State.

The Ittehad-ul-Muslimin

The preponderance of Muslims in the state service can be guaged from the fact that out of 175 listed in a *Who's Who* in 1937, 121 were Muslims (86 Sunnis and 35 Shi'as) and only 26 were Hindus. The breakdown of the entire population by religion was as follows:

Hindus	10,040,709	63.3%
Untouchables	2,928,040	17.9%
Muslims	2,097,475	12.8%
Tribals	678,149	4.1%

[Ceusus of India 1941, Hyderabad Vol II:672-674]

In the first couple of decades of this century an organization called the Anjuman-e-Tabligh-ul-Islam was active in trying to convert people to Islam. It especially concentrated on the untouchables, as the community who were most oppressed by caste Hinduism. For a number of untouchables this offered an escape route from unending social degradation, because even if they remained in their hovels it appeared that they nevertheless became part of the ruling community and had hope for state assistance in the future.

The Tabligh had a certain amount of success, and this prompted an intervention by the Hindu reformist organisation, the Arya Samaj. The Samaj, formed in the Punjab in the 1880s, never really took off as a mass organization and has remained a small sect, but in Hyderabad in the 1930s it achieved an importance never attained before or since anywhere. Although it only had 40,000 members in establishing a 'Shuddhi Sabha' for re-converting Muslims to Hinduism, it provoked an energetic response from Islamic activists. The main area of activity was in Gulbarga and Bidar districts, and the government was trying to restrict its activities from 1934 onwards. The first serious communal clash was reported in 1936 [*Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* Vol IV 1966:90]. The response did not only come from the Tabligh, an essentially religious body, but from the political organisation of the Islamic chauvinists, the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimin.

The Ittehad was originally a social and cultural organisation until it came under the control of Bahadur Yar Jung, a noble who had

started his political career with the Tabligh. It came to reflect, in a rabid fashion, the communalism of the Muslim League in British India. Basing itself on the theory that Hyderabad was a Muslim state, the Ittehad held that the Nizam was the representative and symbol of the sovereignity that was contained in the Muslim community and that he exercised it on their behalf [Cantwell Smith 1950:33]. They adopted a slogan to express this: 'Anal Malik' roughly 'we are the rulers.' In this way the Ittehad came to represent the interest of the Muslim petty bureaucrat, the teacher, the shopkeeper, the lawyer, who saw their existence and livelihood being swamped if the state was run by Indian nationalists (who were mainly Hindu) rather than by the dynasty, with its emphasis on its Muslim character. In fact, behind their expressions of loyalty was the threat that the crown itself was embodied in their interests. This was actually a threat to the autocracy itself, since it posited a higher authority than the ruler. However, the dynasty required the Ittehad to support its own policy, and so was eventually hoist by its own petard.

To get an impression of what the Ittehad was like here is a passage from one of their newspapers, the *Rahbar-Deccan*, of 31 December 1939. The National Conference referred to was a proposal for settling communal problems following riots and the Congress *satyagraha* of 1938:

> . . . the Hindus of the State shall have to place perfect trust in the Musalmans and banish the idea of their being in a majority. Any action of theirs which will endanger the Islamic character of the State will prevent the Musalmans from joining the National Conference and consequently the National Conference cannot be National. The Constitutional Reforms that the State may introduce will never be successful unless there is Hindu-Muslim unity. The Hindus also should disabuse their minds of the intoxication of majority. [*Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* Vol IV 1966:195]

The State Congress

The Indian National Congress had initially been sympathetically disposed towards the Indian princes, seeing them as surviving remnants of an independent Indian polity. As Congress became dominated by radical petit-bourgeois elements, the role of the princes as agents of British rule, as well as their almost unifo-mly reactionary domestic policies (prior to the 1930s, when some of the

more perspicatious rulers undertook internal reforms and got the Congress seal of approval), attracted an increasing amount of hostility. In 1935 this became important because the India Act passed by the British Parliament in that year provided for eventual independence as an Indian Federation in which the Indian States would possess a disproportionate amount of infiuence at the Federal level. Now that the political complexion of the states would affect the nationalists in British India the Congress took up in earnest the question of politics in the states.

In 1936 the Congress sponsored the All-India State People's Conference, with Jawaharlal Nehru as President. Thinly disguised as an independent organisation, it served as a means of liaison for Congress supporters in the states. It also promoted the formation of Congress-type organisations in several of the states. Early in 1938 moves were made to start one in Hyderabad. The activities of the Arya Samaj in Marathwada and the Andhra Mahasabha in Telengana made some of the conservative nationalists worried that they would lose control of the radicalized youth elements [*Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* Vol IV 1966:132].

The preliminary organizing steps had been made by September, but the first public statement of the State Congress on 5th September revealed the vacillating and compromising basis of the Hyderabadi Congress supporters:

> The name 'Congress' has been adopted merely to emphasise the nationalist basis underlying this movement as distinguished from that of communal or provincial movements. . . The second important point which the Committee desires to stress is that this movement is founded upon sincere loyalty to the Asaf Jahi throne and it will always strive to enhance the prestige and power of the king who is the embodiment of the power and glory of this State. [*Frcedom Struggle in Hyderabad* Vol IV 1966:137].

Not surprisingly the Hyderabad government was not at all frightened by this document and banned the State Congress on the 9th September. The reason given was that it was a communal organisation because no Muslims would join it and because it was associated with political organisations outside the state. The first reason was a cosmetic, the second was the real reason as the Nizam's government was not at all enamoured at the idea of being part of an independent

India. Leaders of the State Congress had a series of discussions with the government in a vain attempt to get the decision reversed but negotiations broke down on 26 September.

The leadership of the State Congress was effectively in the hands of its General Secretary, Swami Ramanand Tirtha. A Gandhian ascetic. Tirtha had been running 'national' school at Hipparge in Marathwada following a spell as a full-time organizer in one of the nationalist controlled trade unions in Bombay. Following the collapse of negotiations the State Congress decided to undertake *satyagraha* in small batches. They were pushed into this by the Arya Samaj.

Taking advantage of the opening of the nationalist issue the Arya Samaj decided to launch a *satyagraha* of its own in protest against the suppression of its conversion activities. This began on 24 October, three days before that of the State Congress. The Congress *satyagraha* consisted of nothing more than writing to the police chief informing him that Tirtha and five of his secretaries would be working in the State Congress offices and defying the ban. They were duly carted off to jail, and this charade was repeated 17 times until the *satyagraha* was called off on 24 December. The total number of people involved was 75.

The Arya Samaj *satyagraha* continued, along with one organized by the Hindu Civil Liberties Union, a front for the extreme right wing party, the Hindu Mahasabha. A total of 12,000 people were involved, 5,000 of whom were Hyderabadis. This *satyagraha* was not called off until 21 July 1939. The Aryas suffered worse in jail than did the Congress *satyagrahis* and 23 of them died in prison [*Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* Vol IV 1966:92-93].

The speedy collapse of the State Congress campaign is indicative of the weakness of radical nationalism in Hyderabad. They lacked any real social base and this was reflected in the lack of confidence that led to the adoption of the strategy of individual *satyagraha*, which involved a miniscule number of people. Compare that to the mobilisation of the Arya Samaj, a reactionary fundamentalist religious group, who kept thousands of people coming forward for months. They set up an extensive network of temples (*mandirs*) throughout the state, which served as the organisational base for their campaign. Because they were organising on a militant basis, many future communist militants were active in the Arya campaign and participated in the self-defence groups which were set up

around the *mandirs*. [Prasad interview 1979].

The British Resident, reporting to New Delhi on 17 December, had got an accurate idea of what the State Congress was really like:

> It is somewhat early to judge of the general reaction to the ban on the State Congress. But protests seem to have been less vigorous than might have been expected and it appears, for the moment, to have completely disorganized the opposition. The fact that the 'Congress' was such an inchoate body, unknown save to those in process of organizing it, probably accounts for the lack of sympathy felt for its demise [Political Department File No 1098-C 1939].

What was rather more worrying for the State Government was an outbreak of student militancy at Osmania University in Hyderabad city. The students involved typified the nature of radical nationalism in Hyderabad, for the normal route to a job was through the public services, which were dominated by Muslims. The agitation began in November when students at the Government Intermediate College at Aurangabad began to sing the nationalist song *Vande matarm* instead of the Hyderabad national anthem. It soon spread to the Hindu students at Osmania, where there were the additional complaints that students were compelled to wear uniforms in the Muslim style of dress and that post-graduate studies were available only in Arabic, Urdu and Persian. The students were suspended and then expelled but the unrest to educational institutions all over the state. The Resident, at least, was worried that this campaign might breathe life into the State Congress *satyagraha*. On 5 December he wrote:

> An unfortunate fillip . . . has been given to the movement by a fresh incident which occurred in the Osmania University. A prohibition of the singing of '*Vande matarm*' in the Hindu hostels has led to a strike by the Hindu students with a sympathetic strike in the City College, and to the rustication of the 101 students concerned in the singing. More may be heard of this, especially since a determined attempt is being made to interest students in the movement [Political Department File No 1615-C 1939].

The students held out against the threats from the government and eventually over 800 were expelled from the university and government run schools and colleges. The university students were compensated by being offered places at the Congress controlled University of Nagpur in the Central Provinces of British India, much to the annoyance of the Hyderabad government. No one mentioned what happened to the school students, but in his autobiography Tirtha said that the *Vande mataram* episode initiated a whole generation of students into political activity. It did so because it was a spontaneous movement of people who had something at stake, even if it was just a job as a lawyer.

Two things had motivated the State Congress *satyagraha*. The first was the attempt to out-manoeuvre the Federation plan of the British by stirring up nationalist support in the states. The second more particular reason was to head off the growth of the Arya Samaj in Marathwada which was threatening to absorb young Hindu activists. In 1938 and for long ofterwards the State Congress lacked a real social base, for it could gain the allegiance of neither the merchants, nor the urban petit-bourgeoisie (whose leadership was now abroad) nor the rich peasants, who were a small group in Marathwada and were dominated by the Andhra Mahasabha in Telengana. The State Congress stumbled on to no great purpose for several years.

After being instrumental in taking the decision to call off the State Congress *satyagraha* Gandhi carried on an extended correspondence with the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, Sir Akbar Hydari. Hydari was the last strong politician of the Hyderabad State, and fancied himself as something of a statesman. Gandhi certainly flattered him in this respect, but it is true that Hydari had his own contacts with the Congress and throughout 1938 was trying to get Congress approval for his administration. It was the banning of the State Congress that was the ticking point. The Congress-supporting industrialist Jamnalal Bajaj wrote to Hydari on 14 October:

> As a well-wisher of the state allow me to point out, in all humility but emphatically, that prudence requires that the ban should be lifted without further delay. [*Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* Vol IV 1966:178].

The problem was that the State Congress, even though it was a mere shell, represented the hold of an independent India over the Hyderabad State, which was the one thing that Hydari and the Nizam wished to avoid. While communal clashes continued, being especially bad in Bidar city where the police helped the Ittehad to burn down the bazaar [Tirtha 1966:109], haphazard negotiations continued on the possibility of a negotiated settlement, the negotiations being conducted by Bahadur Yar Jung on behalf of the Ittehad and M. Narsing Rao on behalf of the State Congress.

The State's Plans

The negotiations had, in fact, been pre-empted by the government which had its own plans for constitutional changes. Hydari's first action on becoming Prime Minister in 1937 was to appoint a Reforms Committee. The terms of reference made its purpose quite clear:

> Keeping in view the conditions in and the requirements and circumstances of the State, to investigate and report on all suitable alternatives for the more effective association of the different interests of the State with the Government whereby the latter may be placed in continuous possession of their needs and desires. [*Report of Reforms Committee* 1938:xxix].

The chairman, Dewan Bahadur Aravamudu Aiyangar, and his three Muslim and one Hindu colleagues came up with the sort of recommendation that might have been expected, although they were based on some quite extraordinary logic. Rejecting elections based on territorial constituencies on the basis that they caused communal tensions, they came down in favour of representation by economic interest. The odd Hindu member objected, to no avail. They came up with a plan for expanding the State legislature from 20 to 70 members. 33 would be elected 37 nominated by the Nizam. Of those nominated, 18 would be government officials. Apart from the eight elected seats for rich peasants, four for tenants and one for organized labour, representation by economic interest meant that every seat in the legislature was filled by a member of the ruling class, which was undoubtedly the intention. The Committee made its ideological inspiration and intentions quite plain:

> This is the trend of modern progressive thought on which rests the theory of the Corporate State, postulatiag the need for promoting harmony, on the basis of equality, between the different productive classes in a country, and there seems to be no reason why the proposed experiment should not be given a fair trial, when unfortunately various disruptive agencies have become the necessary auxiliaries to the system of territorial representation all over India, and which luckily for us have not so far been set up in our State [Reforms Committee 1938:54-55].

Thus clearly aimed at the State Congress, it avoided the necessity of communal representation, because Muslims would be proportionately over-represented in a system based on interests where Muslims dominated, and most of the rest would be pro-regime Hindus. It also explains why the government was so hostile to the appearance of the State Congress campaigning for responsible government, and also why the communal unity talks were largely cosmetic since any territorial communal representation would have put the government in the hands of the Ittehad. Bahadur Yar Jung and Narsing Rao agreed on 50% representation for Hindus and Muslim in the assembly, but then fell out because each wanted the Christian and Parsi representation taken out of the other's 50% [Political Department File No 17,000-C 1938]. It is indicative of the conciliatory position of the Congress that Bahadur Yar Jung was able to have amicable talks with Nehru and the leading Muslim member of Congress, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad when the negotiations in Hyderabad broke down. Eventually the whole proceedings were vetoed by Gandhi, who carried on an unproductive correspondence with Hydari well into 1940. Individual *satyagraha* was restarted and Tirtha was arrested on 11 September. His comment on this is indicative of the passivity of Gandhian politics and indirectly of the lack of a base for the State Congress:

> The moment I was placed in Nizamabad jail I ceased to think of any events happening outside. I knew that I would have to be inside jail for a pretty long period . . . it was, therefore no use worrying about what was happening outside [Tirtha 1966:120].

The Ittehad at this time was rattling its sabre in characteristic

fashion. A resolution carried at a General Meeting on 1 December 1940 stated:

> If the Hyderabad Government lifts the ban so wisely and prudently clamped on the State Congress, only because of a change in its name, the Anjuman makes it manifest to the Government that the Anjuman shall resort to every such step as will make the existence of the State Congress and its formation abortive [*Freedom Struggle* Vol IV 1966:195].

The individual *satyagraha* was an even bigger flop than the one two years before and only six other people were licenced by Gandhi to take part. Tirtha frankly admitted the derelict conditions of the State Congress in 1941:

> In fact none outside seemed to attach much importance to the symbolic satyagraha which was offered to vindicate the existence of the State Congress. A certain confusion of thought seemed to have arisen. Anyway, nothing could be done by me or anybody else [Tirtha 1966:127].

Tirtha was released on 16 December 1941 but that made no difference. The State Congress remained banned and there were no more attempts to revive it until after the war. Although about 400 people were arrested for civil disobedience when the Quit India Campaign was launched by the Congress in British India in August 1942 there was no central direction to activities in the state and the movement quickly collapsed. To make matters worse for the Congress the one nationalist organisation that had a real base, the Andhra Mahasabha, was coming under the domination of the Communist Party of India.

6 The Communists in Hyderabad

There had been no socialist tradition in India prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. There had been working class activity, including strikes, especially during the nationalist campaign of 1905-08. However, these struggles, and the new unions that were formed after 1918, were dominated by leaders of the various Congress factions and did not represent an independent working class organisation. Despite a large number of Indian students studying in Europe and the attention which Marx and Engels had shown to colonial questions in general and to India in particular, there appear to have been only two recorded Indian socialists prior to 1917. One was Madame Cama, a Parsi from Bombay who lived in Europe from 1902 and who attended and spoke at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International in 1907 as an Indian delegate. The other was Shapurji Saklatvala, a member of the ILP in Britain before World War I and later Communist MP for Battersea between 1924 and 1929. This surprising situation was as much to do with the political degeneration of the Second International as anything else. The process of decay in abondoning Marxism and class struggle in Europe carried with it a purely token attitude towards the liberation of the victims of European imprialism. In practical terms, this meant that there were no efforts made to build socialist organisations in European colonies (with the exception of Indonesia). Certainly the small, fragmented British socialist parties made no attempt to make any contact with India.

The Bolshevik Revolution had a considerable but limited impact on Indian nationalists. These included both the Bengali terrorists, who were Hindu chauvinists, and a group of Muslim students who migrated to Afghanistan because the British were waging war against the titular head of all Muslims, the Sultan of Turkey, who was allied to the Central Powers. Together with M.N. Roy,[9] who

[9]M.N. Roy, who had been associated with terrorist groups in Bengal prior to World War I, had gone to the USA just before the outbreak of war. Although he had probably been in contact with socialist groups in the USA, it was not until 1917 that he became a Marxist while he was in Mexico. He met the exiled Bolshevik Micheal Borodin, who arranged for him to attend the Second Congress of the Third International.

had made his way to Moscow as a delegate to the Third Congress of the Third International from the Communist Party of Mexico, some of these people formed the Communist Party of India in exile at Tashkent in Central Asia in October 1920.

The problems which beset the new party were those which have dogged it ever since. A large number of those who joined it from nationalist groups had not really abandoned their old politics. Factionalism, of an often absurd variety, began as soon as they did not get their own way. Additionally a large number of opportunists and police spies wormed their way into the party. This was not unusual for a revolutionary party, but what really sealed the fate of the new Communist Party was the absence of an independent revolutionary tradition. The only member of the CPI who showed an independent attitude towards the Comintern leadership was M.N. Roy. After he was ousted from the party and the Third International in a purge the CPI mechanically followed every twist and turn of Comintern politics, which by that time were geared to the requirements of Russian foreign policy.

The CPI alomst destroyed itself (not for the last time, it must be said) at the beginning of the 1930s. While the Congress-led Civil Disobediance Movement was at its height in 1930-32, the CPI, following the notorious 'Third Period'[10] line of the Comintern, branded the Congress as 'Social Fascists' and refused to have anything to do with them. They were rescued from the consequences of this disastrous policy by a fortunate combination of events. At the same time (1935) that the Comintern came up with the idea

[10]Following the failure of trade negotiations with European capitalist countries, in 1928, the Soviet bureaucracy, which was just about to consummate its internal counter-revolution, got the Comintern to declare that the third, and final, period, of world revolution had arrived. The first had been the revolutionary period between 1917 and 1921, the second the succeeding period of retreat. Since revolution was in sight, then everyone who stood in its way was counter-revolutionary, hence the characterisation of the social-democratic parties as 'social-fascists.' The Comintern was partly able to get away with this because the leadership of many of those parties actually had betrayed the working-class in 1918-21. The policy, which was actually dictated by the foreign policy needs of the bureaucracy faced with hostile capitalist countries, some of whom had social-democrats in the government, was a disaster. It certainly caused the defeat of the German working-class at the hands of the Nazis.

of the 'Popular Front'[11] as a means of halting the growth of fascism, a number of members of the Congress, including Jawaharlal Nehru, formed the Congress Socialist Party inside the Congress.

The formation of the CSP was a reaction to the growth of the right-wing inside the Congress after the defeat of the Civil Disobedience Movement. What it did do was provide the CPI with 'progressive' elements who were willing to work with them. The CPI entered the CSP with a will and worked so energetically that when they were finally expelled in 1939 (many of the 'progressives' having reverted to orthodox nationalism), they took a large number af activists with them. For instance, in Kerala they took the lot. In early 1940 the entire CSP organisation there converted itself into the local CPI [Namboodiripad 1976:201]. Their success was not so much due to the fact that they were revolutionary socialists but because they offered a way, even if it was reformist, of fighting imperialism. In contrast the Congress, dominated as it was by Gandhian politics of class collaboration, was not willing to lead an effective mass struggle to get the British out.

It was this kind of dissatisfaction with the State Congress *satyagraha* that led to the formation of a CPI section in Hyderabad. In fact several groups who had been seperately moving towards

[11]In 1934, following the chaos of the afore-mentioned Third Period, the Soviet bureaucracy got the Comintern to perform a 180° change in policy. The Popular Front was—and is—an alliance of communist parties with bourgeois parties, variously described as 'anti-fascist,' 'anti-imperialist,' and most commonly, 'progressive' and 'democratic'. Between 1935 and 1939 it was actually applied in France and Spain –in the latter case, it meant that the Communist Party acted as the police of the bourgeois Republican government in restraining workers and peasants from revolutionary action during the Civil War and so was a substantial factor in the fascist victory. With occasional intervals it has been the basic strategy of communist parties ever since, under a variety of different names, but with consistent lack of success (*e.g.* Sudan 1971, Chile 1973. Indonesia 1966, Italy 1976-79). The irony is that on the rare occasions when genuinely democratic and progressive bourgeois parties do exist, such as in the case of the Italian Radical Party, then the Communist Party will have nothing to do with them, dismissing them as 'extremists'. It is a fundamentally different concept from that of the United Front, which is an alliance over specific issues between communists and social-democrats (*i.e.* between working class organisations), and which was first formulated from the Fourth Congress of the Third International in 1922 lo deal with the situation where communists found themselves in a sizable minority in the working class vis-a-vis the social-democrats.

the CPI were brought together under the general supervision of the Andhra Provincial Committee from the Andhra coastal region of the Madras Presidency in British India. The CPI members in the Marathwada region were largely recruited and influenced by the CPI from Bombay, but they were always much weaker than the organisation in Telengana. The students involved in the *Vande-mataram* incident and activists from the Andhra Mahasabha were contacted by the Andhra Provincial Committee as was a group of intellectuals in Hyderabad city known as the 'Comrades Association' which included the famous Urdu poet Makhdoom Mohiuddin [D.V. Rao 1974:3]. Apart from the specific Indian situation the idea that the Soviet Union had the solution to the problems besetting the capitalist world and offered a real alternative to fascism was a strong attraction to dissatisfied redicals [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1972:31].

Immediately after the formation of the CPI organisation in Hyderabad the party went through another of its wild switches in line. The Stalin-Hitler Pact of August 1939 suddenly took the heat off fascism as far as the Comintern was concerned and the war was to be opposed because as an imperialist war it hit at the interests of the international working class. For two years the CPI was repressed, only to undergo another 180° switch in line after the Nazi invasion of Russia miraculously changed the 'imperialist war' into a 'people's war'. From bitter opponents the CPI were transformed into the most entusiastic supporters of the war effort, much to the disgust of the Congress, tens of thousands of whose members were in jail after the failure of the 'Quit India' civil disobedience campaign of August 1942. The politics that were drummed into the new CPI members during this period were largely to determine what would happen four or five years later.

The new members of the CPI received a political education based on Rajani Palme Dutt's '*Leninism*' and '*History of India*', and Stalin's '*Foundations of Leninism*':

> It was in the early stages of the second world war, which was characterised as imperialist war, that we began to function. The programme and the tactical line we were provided by the party (PC leadership) was based on the Proletarian Path (a document which contains the CPI's line for that period . . . it advocated armed insurrection of the working class to overthrow British

> imperialism. It had not provided the understanding to the party that an agrarian revolution combined with prolonged armed struggle alone can overthrow British imperialism and feudalism completely. Based on this understanding, taking into account the feudal autocratic nature of the state where there was no trace of even a formal democracy, the party units were provided with a programme and a tactical line whose essence was to mobilise the people to implement the existing laws, whatever it may mean. [D.V. Rao 1974:3-4].

What the training programme produced was a cadre which was politically dependent on the twists and turns of Russian foreign policy, and which had no conception of the politically independent organisation of workers and peasants. As we shall see, a little later, there was another training programme which produced slightly different results.

One of the motives behind the Congress enabling the student activists to finish their studies outside the state had been to prevent them from returning to their villages and organizing there. To keep such people under control had been one of the reasons for the formation of the State Congress and unleashing them on the villages would have ruined the exercise. After the CPI managed to form an organisation in Hyderabad in 1940 it was decided to form a Kisan Sabha (peasants' organisation). The government reacted fiercely, and banned the proposed organisation. In a move that was to have far-reaching consequences, the CPI then fell back on the idea of entering the Andhra Mahasabha to use it as a vehicle for organizing in the rural area [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

In fact there was no real need to 'enter' the Andhra Mahasabha as a number of the new members of the CPI, notably Ravi Narayan Reddy and B. Yella Reddy had been active members for several years. Additionally it was not likely to be banned because of its moderate leadership. The intention of the CPI was to build up a mass movement around limited demands. By itself this did not contradict communist traditions—organizing around limited, 'reformist' demands has been an integral part of socialist practice right from the beginning of the movement. But not only the demands but also the perspectives were limited. In taking up the issues of forced labour, illegal exactions, and later the corrupt way in which the foodgrains levy was administered, the CPI in most areas

did not go beyond making representations to government officials. In doing this a leading CPI cadre of the time maintains that they were ignoring a tradition of peasant struggle that could have been used to build peasant organisations [D.V. Rao interview 1974).

After the entry of Russia into the war in 1941 the CPI's position improved dramatically, as they embraced the conflict as a 'people's war.' Now enthusiastically supporting the war effort, all bans and proscriptions on them were lifted. This abrupt change of line did, however, conflict somewhat with their attempts to organize the Telengana peasants (to say nothing of what happened elsewhere in India). Although the CPI has since set standards of sycophancy towards the ruling class to which others can only aspire, the following extract from the report of its first conference shows that it was already a long way down that road:

> What has sustained and strengthened our Party? The clear undying fire of our patriotic policy, the clear-headed realism that comes from the acceptance and application of Marxism-Leninism. We refused to sabotage the defence of our mother land just because the imperialst bureaucrats were acting as they would . . . we did not allow provocation to swerve us from the path of our own patriotic duty to the Congress. The more Congressmen slandered us as pro-British, the more we fought the imperialist slander that the Congress was pro-Jap. The more vituperative the Congressmen became towards us the more humbly we went to persuade them that if they continue to sabotage the defence of the country, India will not get freedom but fascism [*People's War*, Vol I No 42, 13.6.43].

Marathwada—a Popular Front with the Ittehad

The CPI in Marathwada took the class-collaborationist line to its logical conclusions. As the 'active component' of the Marathwada Parishad (the local equivalent of the Andhra Mahasabha) they—

> called on its workers to co-operate with organisations and the government to solve the food question. It formed joint food committees with the Ittehad-ul-Muslimin local committees. It also suggested certain alterations in the interests of the poor peasants, part of which the government accepted and reduced

> the quota of levy from them. It worked ever since with the people, calling on them to support the government plan and giving the government a true picture of conditions [*People's War*, Vol II No 50, 11.6.44].

Behind this high-flown rhetoric the CPI had become the left face of British imperialism. As practically the only party which consistently organized workers and peasants at the rank and file level, it was uniquely placed to carry out the message of collaboration with British imperialism in its struggle for survival. This meant cooperation with the food levy scheme and a policy of discouraging strikes. The contradiction in this was by smothering struggle and by preaching cooperation with an oppressive regime they were destroying the very rank and file organisation that had given them the ability to cooperate with the British in the first place. Their sycophancy went even further than that towards the Congress, mentioned above. In their desperate search for 'progressives' to ally, they with, they even alighted upon the Ittehad-ul-Muslimin. The CPI distributed an appeal to the delegates to the Ittehad's 1944 conference:

> In order to set all fears of Hindu domination at rest, the appeal suggested that in the cabinet the Ittehad could have 50% seats, while the organisations of the Andhras, Maharashtrians, and Karnatakis would have an equal number.
>
> This appeal was very well received by the mass of Muslims who attended. A progressive trend is growing inside the Ittehad. In the district, local committees of the Ittehad have already co-operated with the Maharashtra Parishad. This trend must and will grow on the basis of joint action, in service of the people that effaces mutual suspicions and doubts [*People's War*, Vol II No 50, 11.6.44].

Actually, this was ridiculous. The Ittehad was a violent chauvinist organisation dedicated to Islamic supremacy and there had been no changes in its composition or objectives. To propose equal Hindu-Muslim representation was a total capitulation to the Ittehad's communalism, and had the potential of creating great confusion among the thousands of workers and peasants who supported the CPI but who knew perfectly well what the Ittehad

was. The irony is that the more the CPI behaved in this manner and peddled the prospect of the 'progressive' British, Congress, or Ittehad, the weaker its own position became. As a CPI organizer of the time said of the party leadership:

> Their conception of the united front with liberal reformist national leadership including the left, has not allowed them to take the revolutionary peasant movement to the level of land seizure. With this left orientated liberal reformist outlook and practice, the communists could come forward as left forces on the national scene but could not fight for hegemony of the working class on the national movement on general and peasant movement in particular [D.V. Rao 1974:4].

Nevertheless by 1943 the CPI had built a well-developed organisation in Telengana. A state committee with a secretariat of nine[12] existed, district committees in Nalgonda, Karimnagar, Adilabad and Hyderabad City were above taluqa committees, going down to area organizers and village cells, which had their own committees if they had enough members [Prasad interview 1979].

The Andhra Mahasabha

As part of their perspective the CPI managed to take over the Andhra Mahasabha. After the eighth annual conference in 1941 it had taken the style of a radical nationalist organisation at the instigation of the communists. It attempte to organize around campaigns like 'Detenu Day,' 'Education Week,' 'Anti-Forced-Labour Week,' etc. [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:19]. The most important and, as it turned out, crucial, issue was the grain levy campaign. This levy produced a huge uproar, for the reasons shown in Chapter III. The CPI/Andhra Mahasabha intervened by their cadres standing by the collection points in the taluqa towns and intervening in instances of irregular collection of the levy. They also brought out a leaflet explaining what the levy was and how people were being fleeced by corrupt collection. In this simple way they got themselves known all

[12]They were: Ravi Narayan Reddy, B. Yella Reddy, D.V. Rao, P. Venkataramayya, Makhdoom Mohiuddin,Srinivas Rao, B.D.Deshpande (from Marathwada), C. Chaudri, and S.V.K. Prasad, who was the real secretary, but as he was not a citizen of the State, Venkataramayya nominally filled the post.

over Telengana as the people who fought for the peasants' interests. Before this campaign they had contacts in only a very few areas. After, they had contacts in the entire region [Prasad interview 1979].

The right-wing nationalists in the Andhra Mahasabha were not at all happy at this turn of events and organized to win back the presidency of the organisation at the 1942 and 1943 conferences. By the time of the 1944 conference at Bhongir, however, the work the CPI had been doing over the levy and the very fact that they had taken up the problems of forced labour and excessive taxation by *jagirdars* was sufficient for them to build up a groundswell of popular support that scared the right-wing leadership. Faced with the prospect of losing the elections they split from the Mahasabha [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:21]. CPI members now controlled the entire organisation and through it influenced a vast periphery. The very fact that it had done *anything* for the peasants had won the Andhra Mahasabha great credibility, There was now a regular structure for the organisation with a Standing Committee, district and taluqa committees and by 1944 village committees as well. It was possible to build these as by then the CPI-controlled leadership had instituted mass individual membership. By reducing membership subscriptions to four annas per head they recruited over 1,00,000 members in the rural areas [Prasad interview 1979]. There were between 8-10,000 people at the rally at Bhongir. The conference passed the following resolution:

> It said that in order to successfully flght the food crisis, the cabinet should be composed of representatives of the people's organisation in the State. It called upon these organisation to work jointly to put down corruption, and to make the Government's procuremcnt plans a success [*People's War* Vol II No 50, 11.6.44].

We have already seen what their idea of a responsible government was like, and what the crisis produced by the war was like. At a time of massive food crisis and attacks on large numbers of peasants by landlords, the CPI could only bring itself to call for an end to abuses. D.V. Rao was active on the ground at this time:

> The policy was out and out class collaborationist policy, which emasculated the party of its revolutionary content and reduced

it to a liberal reformist party, incapable of leading post-war struggles. [D.V. Rao 1974:6]

In Telengana there were specific reasons which both assisted and arrested this process. Many of the CPI members were easily absorbed into the reformist traditions of the Andhra Mahashaba, many, such as Ravi Narayan Reddy, had been members for some years prior to joining the CPI. As we have seen, many had previously also been members of the State Congress and Arya Samaj. The political line of the CPI fitted in very well with their own political experience. In some areas, notably in Warangal district, the state had specifically appointed liberal field officers, with the result that CPI and Andhra Mahasabha activists were pulled all the more easily into purley reformist legal wranglings. [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. What was different, and what eventually led to the outbreak of large-scale fighting was that the organisation in Nalgonda district was done differently.

D.V. Rao, who was then Nalgonda district secretary of the CPI and district organizer of the Andhra Mahashaba, has described what happened:

> The comrades representing the revolutionary trend in Nalgonda District had gone to the peasant masses took up not only issues like forced labour and illegal exactions, but also boldly championed the cause of tenants, who were faced with the treat of evictions and were victims of exorbitant rents. Besides this they took up the issue of forcible grain collection from the peasants by government officials. The revolutionaries relied on mobilising and organising masses for which they had to face intense repression in the form of arrests and sentences of imprisonment. Whereas in other districts party units relied on representing the grievances to the authorities, which did neither help to build a militant peasant movement, nor mobilise them for further struggles [D.V. Rao 1974:4].

The reason for this strange difference appears to have been almost entirely fortuitous. It happened that party activists in Nalgonda district had almost all come out of the student movement of 1938, and so had not been influenced by Gandhian politics as had the veterans of the 1930-32 campaign who were in the Andhra Maha-

sabha already. In most districts the party operations were supervised by higher-level bodies, notably by the Andhra Provincial Committee in Warangal district. The Nalgonda District Committee, unhampered by these restraints, was free in practice to develop its own programme and method of practice. Perversely, they believed in the lessons on class struggle that were still contained in the CPI's political education programme and were determined to put them into effect [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

In 1942-43, when their organizing activities were just beginning, most of their village cells were composed of youths from rich peasant families with some from landlord families. The District Committee instituted the practice that members from landlord families should first organize against landlords in their own village before being allowed to engage in any other work, in order to make sure that they did not recruit armchair rovolutionaries. The Andhra Mahasabha organizers were invariably CPI members, and began to set up committee in villages to deal with ordinary disputes which were previously settled by landlords on the payment of considerable sums of money. Most of the members of these committees were rich peasants, but there were some members from all communities. The organizers would also set up reading rooms and teach politics—there were translations from Lenin, Stalin and Palme Dutt, and one of the most popular books was Maxim Gorky's novel *Mother*. There were also some local novels, such as *Malapalli*, a novel about the oppression of the untouchables.

The CPI did try to generalize this experience, and in 1944 they held to detailed political classes for the training of cadres, one in Hyderabad with 100 people attending and other in Warangal with 80-100 people. There were two main themes:

(1) The national movement, the international situation, party organisation, and Marxist theory.

(2) The revenue system of Hyderabad, students, women and the trade union movement.

In addition to these special schools there was a regular system of meetings and report-backs to party members—after Central Committee meetings there were a couple of general meetings of members and sympathisers in each taluqa to report on what had gone on. State Committee members went to enlarged meetings of the Provincial Committee as Vijayawada, then to enlarged meetings of the various district committees, which then reported to the taluqa

meetings [Prasad interview 1979]. The cadres produced by this training were the people, who were to fulfil a crucial role in organising the Telengana movement in the succeeding years.

The main impact that the CPI made was in their organisation around agrarian issues. The campaign against forced labour had already caused clashes with landlords. The CPI/Andhra Mahashabha activities then took up tenancy questions as landlords, scared of impending tenancy questions, were beginning to evict people. The CPI members decided that since the legal system was rigged in the favour of landlords, they should fight cases by the mass mobilisation of peasants to resist attacks. In doing this they decided that they should not hold back people who were ready to fight, as was done in other districts. In fact often small landlords were willing to compromise in the face of a large number of organized peasants. On the other hand there were a number of Gandhians working in Telengana, who simply took cases to lawyers in the Andhra Mahasabha leadership. Although the CPI leadership would have preferred the Nalgonda District Committee to behave like that there was little that they could do to restrain them. The struggles initiated by the then Nalgonda leadership increased the prestige of the party and given the speed at which the actions developed and the level of communications available to them, by the time that the state leadership got to know about them it was usually too late to do anything about it.

To give an idea what this activity was really like, here is one incident related by D.V. Rao. After the Andhra Mahasabha conference at Bhongir in 1944 a group of villagers from Jangaon taluqa in Nalgonda District came to the local office of the Andhra Mahasabha and saw Arutla Ramchandra Reddy, a full-time organizer and a member of the right-wing tendency inside the CPI. Invited to their village to help them organize against the local *jagirdar*, he went and made a series of demagogic and inflammatory speeches which were well received. However, instead of organizing the peasants to fight effectively against the *jagirdar*, he went away from the area and rerurned to Hyderabad. The District Committee only heard about these events three weeks later when he made a report and more or less asked what anyone could do. D.V. Rao, who fulfilled a kind of trouble-shooting role, was then despatched to the area to put the campaign on firmer lines Ravi Narayan Reddy also went to the area and held huge rallies. This illustrates the differ-

ence between the practice in Nalgonda of organizing at the base and the national CPI line, which was continually breast-beating about its own virtue but had precious little to say to people who were actually trying to organize themselves where they were. This action related here was the start of the locally famous 'Jangaon Movement,' which foreshadowed the general Telengana movement. In 1943 there had been limited struggles against *vetti* in Suryapet and Khammam, but nothing on the scale of what followed in Jangaon taluqa. In fact, as the Ramchandra Reddy incidents show, not all the activists in Nalgonda were on the 'left', while not all of those in other districts were on the 'right'. In general it is correct to say that the CPI organisation as a whole in Nalgonda was 'left', while outside this was not the case.

When the CPI had been setting the pace in at least some parts of the Telengana countryside, they had also been gaining control of the admittedly weak Hyderabad trade union movement. Apart from railway workers, who had a long tradition of organisation and struggle, the main unionized sections were the colliery workers from the Singareni mines in Warangal district and the textile workers from the large mills. There could not have been more than 20,000 unionized workers in the whole state. The CPI did not build independent leadership at the rank and file level. As was usual in Indian trade unions, the main organizers were usually outside figures. In this case it was Raj Bahadur Gour, a former member of the Comrades Association, who was the union leader in Hyderabad city. True to type, there was only one war-time strike of any significance (on the railways in 1942) as the CPI pursued its no-strike policy in support of the war effort.

By the end of the war the Communist Party had worked itself into a contradictory and therefore very dangerous position. By actually doing any political activity at a time when the Congress had been suppressed and by taking control of the Andhra Mahasabha it had earned a great deal of credibility for itself. By organizing at the base in the villages it had been able to defeat the Arya Samaj, something that the Congress had notably failed to do [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. More than that, the revolutionary attitude of the Nalgonda District Committee had ensured that real fighting organisations were being built in the villages. The danger was that this was quite out of step with what the CPI was doing both nationally and in other parts of the state. Their line of accommodation to the nationa-

lists, whether of the Congress or the Muslim League, would necessarily mean that the political emphasis of the party would be on nationalist and therefore multi-class demands. The politics being practised in Nalgonda, which were dictated by the objective situation, unlike the CPI practice in the rest of Telengana, would lead to class conflict sooner rather than later. The type of organisation to fight this sort of battles had only been built in Nalgonda.

PART THREE

Nightmares—Hyderabad 1945-51

7 The War Begins

Towards the end of 1945 the Telengana peasants were suffering from rapidly deteriorating conditions. As the economic crisis got worse the landlords stepped up their attacks. What surprised the Nalgonda District Committee of the CPI was the way in which these attacks were resisted.

The peasants developed a general resistance to grain collections and forced labour. They came to the local Andhra Mahasabha organizers and asked them to 'form a sangham'—that is, to organize a local branch of the Andhra Mahasabha. Many of the cadres responded in such a positive manner to these peasants' initiatives that after this time the Andhra Mahasabha was known as the 'Gutapa Sangham' while the earlier movement was called the 'Chitty Sangham.'[13] They organized defence squads and went from village to village gathering forces [Prasad interview 1979].

At Palakurthi village in December 1945 the local peasants defeated an attempt by the local landlord to expropriate the crop of the widow Ailamma. They drove of his thugs and guarded her fields. However, the landlords returned with greater force, and captured and tortured those responsible for thwarting his designs. D.V. Rao then went to the neighbouring village of Devaruppla and after holding a general meeting of the village it was decided that each family should provide one young male to go to Palakurthi to defend the village. When the volunteers arrived it had an immediate effect on morale there [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

At about the same time there were incidents in two villages that had not been touched by the Andhra Mahasabha/CPI movement. At Arkunur and Machireddypalli the peasants resisted police and revenue officials who had come to collect the grain levy. True to form, the police retaliated with torture, looting and rape [D.V. Rao interview 1974:8]. The District Committee sent an organizer to Arkunur who managed to obtain statements from 36 out of the 70 raped women. After discussing this kind of spontaneous fight-back

[13]Gutapa—Telugu for a *lathi*, or long stick. Chitty of course, refers to petitions and memoranda.

the District Committee reconsidered their perspectives. The official CPI line was for responsible cooperation with the government but the people whom the CPI in Nalgonda were trying to organize were in violent conflict with the government. In fact, events decided which line the District Committee would take.

The fighting at Palakurthi had been against the forces of the hated *deshmukh* of Jangaon, Visnur Ramchandra Reddy. Enraged by being opposed by people whom he considered his right to ravage, he planned to crush resistance by murdering Andhra Mahasabha activists. On 4 July 1946 his hired gang invaded the village of Kadavendi, a couple of miles from Deveruppla, and fired on a demonstration that was on the way to the *deshmukh's* house. The local activist Doddi Komarayya, a shepherd, was killed. The result was very different from that anticipated by Ramchandra Reddy. A crowd of more than 2,000 people gathered, looted his mango grove and tried to set fire to his house. He was only saved by the arrival of 60 armed police, who managed to get the crowd to disperse on the (false) promise that they would arrest Komarayya's murderers [Sundarayya 1972:36-37].

This killing at Kadavendi is generally taken to be the beginning of the 'Armed Struggle.' Certainly it spraked off a mass movement covering about 150 villages in the surrounding area. Shortly after Komarayya's death 200 acres were seized from a landlord in an adjacent village to Kadavendi and was distributed under the guidance of local CPI members. This was going far beyond previous policy, which had been strictly defensive—the protection of crops, grain stores, etc. The District Committee recieved reports from another 40 villages where they had done intensive work. On the basis of this experience they decided to move on to a programme of land distribution, which of course meant seizing it from the *deshmukhs*. To implement this policy the District Committee decided to establish village committees and local defence groups.

The Nalgonda District Committee was not formally going against party policy in advocating a policy of land distribution. The official statements of the CPI then as now were so full of high-flown rhetoric that it was possible to justify almost anything by reference to them. For instance, in the general election of February 1946 the CPI issued a manifesto which contained this:

The Communist Party shall unite every section of the toiling peasantry whose true interests our programme shall reflect.

The Communist Party shall appeal to the peasantry to support the demands of the landless labourers to build and preserve the unity of the village, to gather unconquerable strength against the enemies of the village.

The Communist Party shall appeal to the landless labourers to seek unity with the peasantry in the common interest of the battle against the three leeches (landlords, moneylenders, profiteers) [*People's Age* 13.1.46].

This contains the basic contradiction of the Popular Front politics, Indian style. If you are trying to maintain the 'village' then you are trying to maitain the existing social structure. The collaboration between class implicit in the idea of the 'village' which had to be 'defended' was made explicit in another passage from the same article:

The Communist Party shall not touch the small zamindar or the rich peasant hut shall open before them the prospect of becoming the best of farmers and cattle-breeders, reputed members in their own village. It shall not allow them to go the way of the traditional leeches, but shall appeal to them to use their leading positions in the village to start a new life of useful labour and co-operative effort.

Actually this is a particularly bad case of bourgeois moralizing. What the CPI were proposing to do was to build a class of small capitalists who would on their own admission dominate the countryside. Not touching the small landlords and rich peasants meant that the CPI could not organize seriously amongst the labourers whom these people employed, nor amongst the small and middle peasants who were indebted to them and who were often their tenants.

In contrast, what the District Committee proposed had almost limitless implications. Land distribution carried out by peasants themselves meant an inevitable struggle with the state at a time when the official policy of the CPI was still to cooperate and make the government operate the laws honestly. In drawing up their programme the district committee relied on their own experience and generalized from it. As I said in Chapter VI they were unique

in their attitude. In other districts the local leadership was mostly sunk in the morass of cooperation and the Popular Front. More importantly, by following national policy blindly the State and Provincial Committees were quite incapable of generalizing the Nalgonda experience. The only help they gave the Nalgonda District Committee were resolutions protesting at repression [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Sundarayya, writing as a member of the Provincial Committee of the time, based in the coastal Andhra area says:

> If we had had a correct revolutionary grasp of the things that were shaping up and had developed our Party on correct Marxist-Leninist principles, taking Telengana itself, we should have trained our cadre and the people for launching a vigorous attack on the whole feudal system, seizing the illegally begotten land from the landlords as well as the surplus land from them, as we had to do later, gaspingly, hestatingly, step by step. We would have trained our cadre and militant not only with lathi defence but even for armed defence. We would not have hesitated for such a long time in allowing to seize and use even the country guns, which resulted in total dislocation and disruption of the first upsurge [Sundarayya 1972:54].

This rather evades the point that what happened was not 'mistakes' but the logical consequences of the CPI's politics. Without the abandonment of Popular Front politics what happened could hardly have been avoided. Meanwhile, considering their isolation the Communists and peasants performed marvelously. In the 120-150 villages covered by the movement at this stage volunteer defence corps were formed in each on the basis of one male youth from each family. Village committees were formed to supervise the distribution of the land of absconding *deshmukhs*. The local population refused to obey the state officials and started to refer disputes and problems to these committees. Questions of ownership of land, of tenancy, and of rent were submitted to the committees. They also took over the function of the *deshmukh* in deciding on personal and family problems. The committees were elected at mass meetings on the basis of a slate submitted by the local CPI activists. Names could be added or deleted and in some cases this did occur [D.V. Rao interview 1974, Prasad interview 1979]. The movement spread

to Suryapet, Bhongir and Huzurnagar and the state administration collapsed in this areas.

But the Nalgonda communists had not totally broken with the Popular Front politics that they had been reared on. The problem was that the slates were drawn up after consultations with the village 'leaders'. Since 'leaders' were invariably the better-off of each community, this resulted in the committees being dominated by rich peasants, which was storing up trouble for the future. The only way to have avoided such a situation would have been if there had been indepenedent organisations of poor peasants and landless labourers. Independent, that is, of other social groups. Instead everything had to be under the umbrella of the Andhra Mahasabha. The issues which the Mahasabha organized around related almost exclusively to those people who possessed land. With the exception, of course, of *vetti*. That affected rich peasants as well, of course, as they were liable but could usually commute it through the payment in lieu. Land distribution itself was mainly directed towards those who already had land and implements, or who had been recently dispossessed, rather than the farm labourers. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the committees were dominated by rich peasants.

Nevertheless, the programme which they did set out to implement was the most radical that has ever been carried out in India. It consisted of:

(1) The abolition of forced labour.

(2) The abolition of illegal exactions and the repayment of negotiated proportions of those which had been exacted in the past.

(3) The return of 'illegally' seized lands. Illegal in this sense included seizure through indebtedness and the manipulation of land records. They faced a problem in that some rich and middle peasants families had also given loans and acquired land. This arose because any peasant family which had a grain surplus used it for lending. At this time it was decided not to re-distribute those lands but to concentrate on the landlords [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. On the other hand, sometimes peasants had bought land from landlords who had seized it from another peasant. In this sort of case they used to offer the aggreived party lands of equal size and fertility, but often came up against the peasant's desire for their hereditary lands [Sudarayya 1972:115].

In response to this campaign the state police set up semi-permanent camps throughout the Jangaon area as bases for raids on the villages. They would first seek out CPI members and Andhra Mahasabha activists, make some arrests, engage in indiscriminate firing when people got together to resist, and generally looted and ravaged the villages. For instance:

> In the last week of November 1946 the police having come to know that village Balemula in Suryapet taluka was harbouring party leaders, raided the village to arrest them. They came into the village and surrounded the house of Comrade Matta Reddy and tried to enter it. Hearing the police arriving, Comrade Matta Reddy got up from his sleep, took up his lathi in his hand, barred their entry into the house and shouted the alarm that the police had come. Hearing his shouts, his neighbours, with sticks in their hands shouting slogans, rushed towards the house. A sub-inspector's arm was broken and many constables' heads were broken, too. Two of their rifles were broken. At this, the circle inspector fired point blank at Matta Reddy who was rushing with his gutapa and at others. Matta Reddy was shot in the head and stomach, and shouting "Sangham ki jai," fell down dead. Three more were seriously injured. Even before the people could recover the dead body, the police put it into the van and sped off. The people tried to obstruct the speeding van but could not do so. People with grief in their hearts at the death of their leader and injuries to others, were enraged that the enemy had slipped away from their hands, so they kept close watch, armed with sticks and slings to meet the enemy's onslaught. Faced with the courage and resistance of the people, the police dared not raid any other house in that village, and other party leaders in that village were saved [Sundarayya 1972:42-43].[14]

The CPI was banned in November 1946 and after that most of the organizers in Hyderabad city went across the border to Vijayawada in India [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:46]. The defence squads were at a great disadvantage because except for a few 'country guns' (home-made muskets) they were only armed with *lathis*

[14]See also D.V. Rao 1974:9, Sundarayya 1972:39-49, Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:43-47.

(sticks) and slings in the face of the modern arms of the police and the army. By December 1946 a lull fell over Telengana as peasant resistance declined in the face of this repression.

The activities of the CPI and Andhra Mahasabha did not evaporate with the downturn in the struggle. One of the most popular methods they used for organizing at this time was the local form of travelling theatre, the 'Burra Katha.' Here is a description of a performance, by an opponent of the movement:

> After the songs were over two men opened the proceedings. The prologue went something like this:
>
> First actor: Comrades, they prate to us of property and law. Property is the loot of theives. Law is the rule of tyrants.
>
> Second actor: As the sun shines equal on all mankind, so shall the workers inherit equally the earth.
>
> First actor: March comrade, to cast down your oppressors. Seize what they have stolen from you.
>
> Second actor: The rich and the proud shall be butchered like goats and the horny feet of the toiler shall splash in the blood of kings.
>
> The Chorus always repeated: March, comrades, to cast down your oppressers.
>
> After the monotone recital of the prologue came a single lengthy act, cleverly recounting a tale of ancient India, the story of a tyrant monarch who lived a frivolous life of luxury at the expense of his poor subjects. A brave and pious guru dared to reproach the slothful king in public. For his perverse misrule and, of course, he was sentenced to death. At the last moment the people rose in rebellion, rescued the guru, and imprisoned the imposter.
>
> The greater part of the play consisted of long speeches by the guru and the proletarian rebels, partly in the usual Marxist jargon, and partly couched in the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi to plant the message more deeply in the hearts and minds of the audience [Zahir Ahmed 1965:94-95].

In addition to these traditional forms the CPI-influenced Andhra Praja Mandali (Andhra People's Theatre Association) produced a specially written play called *Ma Bhoomi* (My Land) which was immensely popular and was responsible for popularizing the

politics of the CPI amongst the Telengana peasants and in the Andhra area [Raj Bahadur Gour 1973:47].

The Workers Fight Back

While it is true that the Nalgonda District Committee was the only official body of the CPI which pushed its work beyond legalistic limits, the industrial workers of the state were in struggle during the same period. During November and December all the large textile mills in the state were on strike for the eight-hour day, involving some 13,000 workers. After a protracted struggle (in Aurangabad they were out for 72 days) the strike was won [Raj Bahadur Gour 1973:2,132]. The All-India Trade Union Congress had been established in the state in July 1976 and had provided the leadership for the mill strike, successfully fighting off attempts by the government and the Ittehad to split the workers on communal lines. In October, 150 trade union and CPI offices in Hyderabad city were raided and 60 leading militants arrested [Raj Bahadur Gour 1947:24]. The repression did not stop there:

> All day-to-day Trade Union activity is rendered impossible. Police rule over working class areas. Meetings and processions are not allowed. Disruption of every sort is encouraged. Rival organisations are fully supported and rowdy groups are given protection. At the Singareni Collieries the police occupied the office of the recognised Union and handed it over to the Company sponsored rival union. Military ruled over the Collieries for three days in February using tear-gas, resorting to blind lathi-charges and indiscriminate arrests. It was stationed there till recently, only to be replaced by a posse of reserve police to keep the workers under perpetual terror. Their President has been arrested. Other worker leaders are either detained or forced to live in hiding [Raj Bahadur Gour 1947:4-5].

There had been a political strike in October after the raids on the trade union offices—17 October had been designated as Anti-Repression day. Apart from the mills there were strikes by workers at the Allwyn Metal Factory, the Iron and Steel Factory and the Oil Cloth Works. The Secunderabad Municipal Workers Union was already on strike for the release of the trade union leaders and

for the payment of an adequate Dearness Allowance [*People's Age* 27.10.47].

The Ittehad reacted by making a systematic attempt to disrupt the workers' movement:

> They go to the workers to disrupt their unions, form rival unions, and weaken their struggle against the vested interests. They attempted to disrupt the preparations for the Railway workers strike in June 1946. They went to them saying that it was a 'Hindu conspiracy' and all that rubbish. They attempted the same during the recent Textile General Strike. They have now with the direct help of the employers and support from the Government formed rival unions at Gulbarga, Nanded, the Collieries and the Railway. But they know what their actual position is in relation to the mass of the workers [Raj Bahadur Gour 1947:36].

There was no attempt to link the organized struggle of the workers in the factories and mines with the peasant movement, in Nalgonda, a situation that was to continue for the duration of the Telengana movement. In the immediate sense this weakened both struggles as the Nizam's regime never faced the combined force of the organized working class and the peasants, a circumstance which undoubtedly made its survival less of a trial than it otherwise might have had been. In the general sense it was a loss in that the organized working class were only organized on a reformist programme while the Telengana movement, which possessed and to a certain extent had implemented a revolutionary programme, was always dominated by the politics of non-proletarian simple commodity producers, what are being referred to here as peasants, although that is not the best term for them. The rural workers were never quite able to break through and become the dominant force in the movement. As it turned out, this failure was the ultimate crisis of the Telengana movement. However, in particular this was the direct result of the political line of the CPI towards the crisis provoked by the withdrawal of the British from India and the refusal of the Nizam to accede to the Indian Union.

The British Withdrawal

The military strategy of the British Empire had collapsed in

February 1942 with the defeat by the Japanese in Malaya and Singapore. The British were only saved from further Japanese advances westwards by American victories in the Pacific. As the main economic benefit of the Indian Empire (the use of Indian foreign exchange surpluses to bolster up the Pound) had vanished with the Depression, there was now little value in maintaining direct political control at a time when the overall political climate in the world was unsympathetic to old-style colonialism. Consequently the newly-elected Labour government after 1945 met about ending British rule as quickly as possible.

Almost to the last minute most people in India expected that there would be no partition but a federation with strong groups of provinces and a weak central authority. The activities of the Hyderabad State Government and the Ittehad should be seen in that light. The government had put forward its attitude during the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps, a Labour member of the British War Cabinet, in March 1942:

> Since Dominion status will mean the creation of a new entity—the 'Crown in India,' His Exalted Highness's relations must continue to be with the Crown in the United Kingdom which, whatever powers with respect to British India it may choose to transfer cannot transfer our relationship with it to any other authority except with His Exalted Highness's consent. If the Crown in the United Kingdom finds itself unable to exercise any of the powers vested in it these powers with regard to them must revert to the State thus reviving the position obtaining before the treaties were concluded. [*Freedom Struggle* 1966:228].

This was just a logical extension of their argument of ally status put forward in 1926. However, there were more than legalistic consequences from a claim to independence if the British left. The Hyderabad government also stated:

> We must also exercise our rights with respect to the free use of the seaport of Masulipatam and must insist on interpretation by an independent judicial tribunal of our rights under Article 3 of the Commercial Treaty of 1802, as it confers certain exemptions on the State which are of great value. The essence of economic freedom is an outlet to the sea which cannot be secured even

with the free use of the seaport of Masulipatam and for which we must endeavour to obtain a railway corridor connecting the State with the seaport. Similarly we must be allowed to purchase the foreign railway lines in the State as they not only take away their earnings derived in the State but control our communications and trade and compete with our own Railway System. The vesting of ownership in British India gives it the power of economic strangulation which it must not retain. Industrially, too, we must be in a position to develop our industries so as to become self-supporting [*Freedom Struggle* . . . 1966:224-225].

This document assumed a basic antagonism between an independent British India and the Hyderabad State. The territorial demand were bound to increase the hostility of Congress politicians, already suspicious that the British were trying to build up the Princely States as a 'third force' under the Federation Plan contained in the 1935 India Act. In March 1942 the Hyderabad Chief Minister, the Nawab of Chhatari, went to see Cripps in Delhi. Following this he sent Cripps on official letter, which concluded thus:

> . . . as Berar, the Northern Circars, and the Ceded Districts are linked with the question of the defence of His Exalted Highness and his Dominions, His Exalted Highness will have the right to reopen the question of the future of those territories in the light of the new situation [*Freedom Struggle* . . . 1966:333].

This went as far as claiming all the territories acquired by the British from the Hyderabad State since 1766. This would mean the gain of a large slice of central India and the control of communications between Madras and the rest of India. Given this, Congress and CPI politicians viewed every move of the Nizam's regime with a high degree of paranoia.

Because of the People's War strategy, when the first clashes with the *deshmukhs* and police began in Nalgonda the CPI press kept a fairly low profile, stating that they were not opposed to the levy scheme while they were opposed to the police attacks [*People's War* 24.1.46]. A month later:

> The Andhra Conference [Andhra Mahasabha—BP] has been exposing the Imperialist designs of using the Princely regime to

annex the Northern Circars and the Ceded Districts—a part of the homelands of the Andhras in British India—in the name of 'Treaty Rights,' 'Outlets to the Sea,' and 'Greater Hyderabad' [*People's War* 31.3.46].

By August the theme of Hyderabad as an imperialist Trojan Horse had been developed with an article entitled. 'The Reality behind Hyderabad Reforms.' The Hyderabad government had produced a variant of its 1939 Reforms scheme which had never been implemented. The new plan called for a 132-member Assembly, with 76 elected members and parity between Hindus and Muslims. There would be joint electorates, but all a candidate needed to be elected was to gain 51% of the votes of his (it was a male franchise) own community, even if he had not got an overall majority. The article went on:

Through these 'reforms', the British hope to be able to push through to a finish their plans to make Hyderabad a solid political, military, and economic base for imperialism . . . Military preparations are afoot, full-swing, to turn Hyderabad into one of the biggest future bases for British imperialism.

From here the Empire's crack aeroplanes and tanks will exercise a whip-hand over all South India, over Ceylon and Burma, and South-East Asia—all in the name of 'freedom', of course.

Secunderabad—the British contonment of Hyderabad—is being strengthened gradually, more and more British troops are pouring in.

Hyderabad's own war army of a lakh of battle-trained soldiers is not only not being demobilized, it is being increased in size. Hyderabad's own air force—again battle-trained—is being increased in size. Military factories are producing fast guns and amunition. Hyderabad is demanding a port vigorously—a safe dumping ground for British troops and British goods [*People's War* 4.7.46].

This was similar to the opinions of the Congress leaders. When the reforms were announced the State Congress issued a lengthy denunciation:

The possibilities of the States under autocratic regimes keeping out of the Indian Union is a positive danger to the unity and freedom of India. The Standing Council considers that free India must be a federal India, composed of willing and autonomous units constituted and regrouped on a cultural and linguistic basis and having a uniform and democratic constitution [Durga Das 1973:9].

It was at this point that Congress and CPI politics converged, as the CPI had a policy of creating linguistic states, something that had been formal Congress policy since 1921. The CPI had included this in their election manifesto in 1946, which had called for separate constituent assemblies for a total of 17 such areas. In the Andhra coastal districts of the Madras Presidency they had been campaigning for 'Vishalandhra'—a united state of those coastal districts and the nine Telugu-speaking districts of Telengana inside the Hyderabad State.

This policy was also adopted in Telengana. In 1946 the annual session of the Andhra Mahasabha could not be held because of the government's repression—the President B. Yella Reddy, was interned at Khammam. An enlarged meeting of the Andhra Mahasabha Standing Committee was held in Khammam and it passed a resolution calling for the disintegration of the state, instead of the previous demand of responsible government. The CPI State Committee also issued a statement on the same lines [Prasad interview 1979].

Putting this forward in the middle of a developing civil war was a revolutionary demand, since *at that time* it could only be achieved by the destruction of the colonial state, its army and police, and the overthrow of its ruling class by the workers and peasants. It was certainly very different from the general CPI perspective for achieving Vishalandhra in particular and states reorganisation in general —that is, through the deliberations of a bourgeois-dominated constituent assembly.

However, as the revolutionary faction of the CPI was not in possession of an overall perspective for the fulfilment of their programme, they were not able to prevent the reformist wing from doing its best to dissolve themselves into the Congress campaign. One of the CPI leaders in Hyderabad put it this way under the heading of 'Progressive Unity—need of the hour':

> The State Congress, the Communist Party, and all progressive forces are unanimous of the aims of the struggle:
> to force the Nizam to retrace his steps and declare Hyderabad's joining the Indian Union; to secure a Constituent Assembly elected on adult franchise to frame the Constitution of the State; and to achieve full civil liberties and Responsible Government here and now [Raj Bahadur Gaur 1947:43].

What marks out this programme is the absence of any demands which related to workers and peasants—nothing on trade unions, nothing on land reforms. Although other parts of this document did refer to such demands, it finished off by saying that "The Communist Party has pledged full support for the demands of the State Congress" [Raj Bahadur Gour 1947:51]. In reality, what this meant was that not only were the workers and peasants to be subordinated to the bourgeois nationalists, but that the party was to be absorbed in a 'broad front':

> . . . the triumph will not be easily secured. No single party can achieve it alone, however strong and militant it may be. Only the whole people when mobilised can achieve it. Only a broad united front of State Congress, the Andhra Conference, the Communist, the Socialists, and all other progressive forces can deliver the goods. [Raj Bahadur Gour 1947:50].

But calling for a front with parties who were not at all keen on such an arrangement compelled the CPI to orientate even more on their politics, which meant playing down the class struggles of workers and peasants. So there was no strategy to link up the rising level of struggle throughout India, and the type of intervention of the CPI in Nalgonda remained an isolated case.

The Regime's Final Moves

In fact the fears of Hyderabad being made into a base for British imperialism were not true. The fact that the state government continually harped on the need for an outlet to the sea revealed that an independent Hyderabad could not survive without that outlet to the sea, given a hostile India. Likewise the British, once they had decided to leave India and especially after they had decided to bring the

date forward from June 1948 to August 1947, showed themselves to have absolutely no loyalty towards their 'Faithful Ally,' who was unceremoniously and ruthlessly dumped in the best traditions of British statecraft. Although individual British officials did sympathize with the Hyderabad regime, official opinion moved very strongly behind the Congress-led Interim Government which was established in September 1946.

The Hyderabad regime did try to improve its territorial position by making moves towards the neighbouring small (Hindu-ruled) state of Bastar, which possessed substantial iron-ore deposits. A Special Branch report from the adjacent province of Orissa, dated 1 May 1947, stated;

> It is understood that HEH the Nizam of Hyderabad has taken a move from the Government of India demanding the annexation of Bastar State and some portion of Koraput district of Orissa bordering Bastar State and Jeypore Estate of the same district. If the demand is not conceded the Nizam's Government is trying to take these portions by hook or crook after the British quit India in June 1948. [Durga Das 1973:32].

This move had been orchestrated by an Indian Civil Service officer, who had been a minister in the Hyderabad government and was at that time Commissioner for Tribal Affairs in Orissa. In fact there was no support for this move at any level in the Government of India and the issue faded away. A tour by Sir Mirza Ismail, the Hyderabad Chief Minister, to the four 'Ceded Districts' of Berar, caused a panic amongst the local Congress politicians, who saw it as a plop to re-introduce the Nizam's long-standing claim to those districts. If Sir Mirza Ismail's tour had been intended to whip up pro-Nizam feeling in Berar then it had no success. The Commissioner for Berar reported:

> The general impression created by the visit of Sir Mirza Ismail is that if he came to Berar on a special mission he has failed to achieve any success . . . (His) mission was ostensibly private but there is no doubt that there was some political motive behind it and it was intended to keep alive Hyderabad's claim on Berar. So far as Berar is concerned it has made Berar more sure that it does not want to go back to Hyderabad [Durga Das 1973:19].

As 14 August 1947, the date for the independence of India, approached, it was becoming clear that the 'Faithful Ally,' was about to be abandoned by the imperial power whom it had served with such subservience for two centuries.

8 Dual Power in Telengana

On 14 August 1947 British rule in India ceased. Amid massive slaughter as refugee trains were attacked in the Punjab the old Indian Empire was partitioned into two successor states, India and Pakistan. By this time every princely state bar two had signed a 'Standstill' Agreement and agreed to accede to either India or Pakistan. Junagadh, a small state in Gujarat in the west, had a Muslim ruler and a predominantly Hindu population. The ruler dicided to accede to Pakistan. By October pro-Congress groups in the state had undermined the ability of the regime to govern and the ruler fled to Pakistan. Kashmir, with a split population and a sensitive strategic position, acceded to neither until pro-Pakistani irregular forces were approaching the capital, Srinagar, in October. The Maharaja then acceded to India. The only state to declare its own independence was Hyderabad.

Immediately after independence, while the Nizam's regime banned the flying of the Indian flag, the State Congress launched a *satya-graha*. Apart from inviting arrest by flying the banned flag, they launched a compaign for cutting down the fruiting tops of the toddy-yielding palm and date trees, in an attempt to hit the regime and its supporters by disrupting the excise collection. The CPI enthusiastically joined in this campaign, but unfortunately in their eagerness to unite with the 'progressive' bourgeoisie they had overlooked the fact that they were thereby physically and unilaterally destroying the means of livelihood of the proletarian toddy-tappers.

We converted it for days into large-scale destruction of date and palmyra trees and also physically preventing the toddy-tappers from making toddy. But soon was realised that the toddy-tappers, a large percentage of the rural poor, were losing by this programme their occupation and livelihood and were turning hostile The Party corrected this error, changed its slogan and gave the cal! 'Tap the toddy, give it clean and cheap to the people. But do not pay taxes.' This went to the heart of the people [Sundarayya 1272:57].

This is a little disingeneous. Such an 'error' derived in fact from the CPI's national policy of allying with the afore-mentioned 'progressive' bourgeoisie of the Congress. This episode illustrates the ultimate logic of such a position: the working class (or peasants/ simple commodity producers) lose their independence and fall under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Fortunately for the CPI they were not so committed to this approach that they could not recoil from it when the real nature of it became apparent.

In contrast to this approach, an imaginative approach to the national question in Nalgonda produced positive results. The national movement made it possible to organize in the villages and the existence of the State Congress *satyagraha* produced a mass mobilisation in the villages, but in a rather different way from the activities of the State Congress. CPI/Andhra Mahasabha cadres went on a jaitryatra or tour of the villages, hoisting the Indian flag and destroying village records. By this stroke the national and agrarian campaigns were united in one. As the groups moved on, youths from the villages would join them. So by December the CPI/ Andhra Mahasabha organisers had a hard core of several hundred activists with them from whom the so-called 'company size' squads were formed [Prasad interview 1979].

In fact the State Congress failed as the regime repressed opposition. Swami Ramananda Tirtha had been arrested on 15 August and during the first two months of the *satyagraha*, 21,000 people were arrested [Tirtha 1966: 182]. The regime, including the new Prime Minister, the industrialist Mir Laik Ali, tried to get the *satyagraha* called off. Although Tirtha rejected this, the State Congress suffered from the factionalism endemic to the Congress as a whole and a rival faction decided to join the government. Tirtha was released at the end of 1947, went across the border, and started to organize the activities of the State Congress from outside, for it had been decided to abandon *satyagrah* in favour of raiding from camps on the borders of the state in the Indian provinces. This was partly prompted by the fact that the regular forces of the Hyderabad regime had been supplemented by a force of 'volunteers' raised by the Ittehad—the Razakars.

The Response of the State

Although the Razakars were allegedly only patriotic Home Guards, and were supposed to include Hindus and Christians as

well as Muslims [Mir Laik Ali 1962:78] they were in fact the armed wing of the Ittehad, who saw that their hour had arrived to establish an Islamic state in Hyderabad. They used the Razakars to crush resistance. The people who had to bear the brunt of this onslaught were the workers and peasants of Hyderabad. Most of their 'leaders' had already run away to the safety of organizing hit-and-run raids from inside India. Although the Razakars ranged all over the state, the most effective resistance was in the communist dominated areas of Telengana.

Although the Razakars were dedicated to the idea of an Islamic state, they showed no compunction in coming to the aid of Hindu landlords against peasant resistance. The top strata of the villages were sympathetic to the Congress, but since the Congress had scuttled away they were forced to go along with the CPI-led movement. There was a policy decision to evacuate the villages if the Razakars were sighted. Most of the village officials had already left the villages for the district towns after the village committees had been formed. A few remained after coming to terms with the committees. The *deshmukhs* and the regime reacted to this assault on their power with vicious repression. A couple of typical examples will have to suffice.

A demonstration of three thousand people was marching to Aleru, in Bhongir taluqa in Nalgonda, on 29 November, when it was fired on by armed police. Six people were killed and eighty injured [Sundarayya 1972: 62].

> Early morning on 27 November, a party of 700 policemen attacked Hamabad, a village in Mankota taluk (Warangal district). 55 of them stayed out of the village and 13 went in. The people... resisted for a while and then began withdrawing, the police force standing outside the village started firing at them, killing three and injuring many. Not content with this, they set fire to and gutted the whole village.
>
> The news of this outrage spread almost as the flames were devouring the village and three thousand people from the neighbouring villages of Bochavadu, Pampally, Japeda, Luchnagudem and Chavutapally marched to the rescue of their brothers. The police climbed a hillock that was situated between Hasnabad and Bochavadu and started shooting at them. The people, though armed with primitive weapons, resisted against this fire and two

of them were injured. They then withdrew at 11 a.m.

But at 5 o'clock about 1,500 people from the neighbouring villages of Bivolu Pocharam, Tettlepadu and Jagannathpuram launched an attack on the police party. The police now shifted to another hillock and started firing. The people replied with slings. They had a few muzzle-loaders, but very little ammunition. To make best use of what little they had, three daring young men volunteered. Taking the muzzle-loaders, they went round the hillock from the place from which the police were firing, crawled up to reach a place as near the police as possible...and opened fire at the police killing two and injuring several others. In the resulting panic in the ranks of the police at this unexpected attack, the brave volunteers escaped. Gunda Chandriah of Birovalu was killed in this fight.

The next day a party of 300 reserve police attacked Bochavodu and feasted with the local deshmukhs. The police were led into the village by the tyrants, Challa Satyam and Mokkiah. The police in the afternoon surrounded the village and systematically set fire to it. They shot and killed a woman, Gajja Madramma, who was trying to run away from the flames. The entire village, including the harijan colony, with the exception of a couple of isolated houses, was gutted. [Raj Bahadur Gour 1973:61-2]

Erra Satyam was from a rich peasant family of Cheemirela village in Huzurnagar taluqa, Nalgonda district:

> . . . caring nothing for his parents' opposition, he worked on his fields during the day and gathered all the Harijan youth during the night, politically educated them, enthused them with news of struggle and organized them under the red flag. He conducted their struggles for minimum wages against the local landlords and because of this became the bitter enemy of the landlord class.
>
> Two hundred policemen raided his village at the invitation of the local landlords and he was arrested. But he tricked them and came out. Directly he went underground and continued his work, now not only in his village, but in all the surrounding villages.
>
> With the starting of armed resistance, he organized a guerilla squad and began fighting back the Razakars and police goondas of the Nizam. Gradually, he developed as a general commander of the guerilla squads in his area. He led struggles against the well

known zamindar of Anantgiri, Deshmukh of Buddavaram and Lakkavaram, Venkatareddi and distributed hundreds of acres of land, and thousands of maunds of paddy to the poor. He was a party organiser, a guerilla leader, and a mass leader, respected by one and all in about 30 villages. [Sundarayya 1972:110]

Comrade Yadagiri was working as a labourer in Janareddy Pratapreddy's house. Seeing the people's sufferings, he joined the village guerillas. He had fought very heroically in the Kandagatta and Kotapuda fights. . . After being arrested and then taken to Mundrai camp in the raid on the bus and military lorry at Tirumalagiri, he was tortured horribly for days. They thrust pins under his nails, cut his flesh with blades and put chilli powder in the wounds. The military men used to sit around him, smoking cigarettes, burning him all over his body. He was hanged by the toes, beaten with sticks, boots, rifle-butts, etc. [Sundarayya 1972:111]

Eventually he was shot. What these reports show, apart from the ferocity of the repression, is the way in which the CPI was organising a mass movement. Even allowing for imprecision in estimating numbers, reports of actions consistently mention hundreds and thousands of people being involved from quite small areas. The fact that the police, army, and Razakars indulged in indiscriminate firing and looting shows that they regarded the peasants in general as hostile and engaged in rebellion. In fact they were behaving like contemporary armies engaged in a 'pacification' campaign.

In fact the Nizam's regime was very unsuccessful in suppressing the revolt of the Nalgonda peasants. Moving over to the offensive, the guerillas attacked police and customs posts, *deshmukhs*, houses and the special armed camps that had been set up. Land revenue, the excise and the grain levy were not paid. Land records were destroyed, which was important as these frequently forged documents were one of the means used by the *deshmukhs* to grab land. When the police and military did come and seize grain by force they were usually attacked while transporting it back [Sundarayya 1972:75-76].

At this time the CPI organisation was drastically altered to deal with the fact that they were now organising a mass movement. Instead of being based on State administrative units (districts, taluqas, etc.) they were based on operational functions. Five area committees were formed (Palvancha, Malakotta, Nalagonda, Suryapet,

Huzurnagar). In each area there were a number of zones, each with an organiser, and in each zone, a number of military and political squads [Prasad interview 1979].

Initially there were large district-wide squads of 100-120 men (the 'company squads'), but these proved to be too unwieldy to control without modern communications equipment and sufficient supplies and modern weapons, and without military training and enough personnel to lead them. Regular squads were therefore cut down to about ten people. In addition there were village squads, which provided for local defence, assisted the local committee, and dug up local roads to prevent the regime's forces from approaching by motor transport [Sundarayya 1972:66-67].

Even though the regime's forces were sometimes able to overwhelm the squads, they were effectively confined to raiding out of their camps, and the Hyderabad government ceased to exercise its authority over a wide area of Nalgonda district. By the beginning of 1948, a visiting journalist estimated that the parallel administration had been set up over an area of 13,000 sq miles, containing 2,000 villages and 20,00,000 people [Thapar 1948:28].

The Question of Power

Although the struggle had not been started for the conquest of power, and the armed resistance had started as no more than just that, by this time (early 1948) the struggle raised the question of power. For no matter how much the CPI insisted that all they were campaigning for was accession to India, the fact remained that in Nalgonda there was an agrarian war in process where CPI-led peasants were defeating the forces of the Hyderabad State and were setting up their own local organs of power.

In fact there was no artificial barrier to be drawn between the national movement in Hyderabad and the agrarian movement. At this time 'accession to India' was understood to mean the overthrow of the Nizam and his regime in all its aspects, although this was not quite how it turned out in the end. The demand for accession and the overthrow of the *deshmukhs* were inextricably united because the Nizam's regime rested to a great extent on those very *deshmukhs*. Therefore campaigning for an end to the Nizam's regime logically led on to the agrarian campaign as the objects of both were complementary. In fact people who were actually involved in the campaigns argue that the anti-Nizam struggle was a shield to the agrarian

struggle and that the CPI was greatly assisted by the fact that people saw them as leading the national movement [Prasad interview 1979]. The problem came from the reformist fraction of the CPI, which insisted on a perspective of stages and drew a line after campaigning for accession, declining to implement the agrarian programme. Not that contradictions did not exist inside the agrarian campaign itself.

In fact formally speaking it was rather unclear what programme of activity the CPI was supposed to be implementing. The State leadership had gone to the provincial headquarters at Vijayawada to get further instructions. The Central Committee of the CPI had given approval for an armed struggle because of the Congress border raids. What they did not make clear was the programme for this armed struggle [D. V. Rao interview 1974]. Because what is clear from the reports of the resistance is that the mass of poor peasants and agricultural labourers were involved in the struggle, the objectives of which were still geared to the aims of the rich peasants. Erra Satyam mentioned above is a case in point. Here you have a rich peasant youth who was organising untouchable labourers, and then became the leading local cadre. Without putting aspersions on the sincerity of individuals, a cadre with a large number of members from the rich peasants *had* to be amenable to a political analysis which stressed an alliance with the rich peasants. Not until the labourers could provide their own leadership were their interests going to be represented on the committees, despite people like Erra Satyam. Initially, however, it was the CPI's indulgence towards landlords that caused problems. As Sundarayya put it:

> Politically, it was easy and necessary to confiscate the lands of these big deshmukhs, and pattadars and jagirdars, and get them distributed. But to satisfy the land hunger to some extent and consolidate the mass fighting base, it had become necessary to actively consider taking over all the surplus land.
>
> This move began with the taking over of land over 500 acres. Politically, it was argued and accepted by the Party leadership that there were some big landlords who were with us fighting Nizam rule. To keep that section with us, we should keep the ceiling sufficiently high. [Sundarayya 1972:117]

You could hardly get a clearer exposition of what the Popular Front politics of the CPI actually meant in practice. However, the struggle itself was putting these politics under extreme pressure. Not only in the demand for a land ceiling which affected all landlords rather than just pro-Nizam *deshmukhs*, and not only in pressure to reduce this ceiling. The confidence of the agricultural labourers increased with their involvement in the struggle and they began agitating for higher wages through strikes and their representatives on the village committees. On average, daily wages were raised from 2-3 kgs of grain to 4 kgs. This was resisted by the rich peasants:

> . . . despite the tremendous gains they got from the united struggle against the Government and zamindar, and the major role that the agricultural labourer played to achieve these . . . [Sundarayya 1972:125]

His surprise at a perfectly natural response by the rich peasants is a little ingenuous, for it would only be a surprise if you have a view of society in which the interests of workers and bosses are seen as identical. In this case it derived directly from a view of Indian society, still prevalent on the left in India, that India is dominated by feudalism and therefore 'progressive' capitalists and workers have a common interest in getting rid of it. What happened in Telengana is perhaps the best rebuttal of that argument to date. At the Second Congress of the CPI in February 1948 in Calcutta the party's line underwent a radical change without altering that basic understanding.

The Second Congress of the CPI

In June 1947 the Central Committee of the CPI had passed a resolution which, amongst other things, stated that the Mountbatten award for the partition of India, represented "new opportunities for national advance." Even before independence the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) had published an article by E.M. Zhukov accusing the Congress leadership of capitulating to imperialism. In September, in a report to the first conference of the Cominform[14] A. Zhdanov

[14]The Third International, or Comintern, had been dissolved by Stalin in 1943 in order to placate his wartime allies, the USA and Britain. When the erstwhile allies began to fall out in the postwar period, the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) was set up in October 1947. Unlike the

had called for communist parties to lead movements opposed to imperialism [Mohan Ram 1969:10-12].

This report was not very specific about who the CPI should ally with in fighting imperialism but it was used by dissident elements in the CPI who were appalled by the way in which the CPI had attatched itself to the Congress government at a time in which India was being ripped apart by communal disturbances. At a Central Committee meeting in December 1947 the leadership of the General Secretary, P.C. Joshi, was overturned by a group led by B. T. Ranadive. Veering right around, the Central Committee adopted a resolution condemning Indian big business as reactionary, saying that partition had given India false independence, and therefore the Congress was simply a tool of imperialism.

These points were included in the Political Theses of the Second Congress, which also replaced Joshi with Ranadive as General Secretary. Going full circle from the previous policy, it put forward a perspective of immediate revolution, under the new formulation of People's Democracy:

> The struggle for People's Democracy is a democratic fight of the millions, the masses of the workers, peasants and the toiling intelligentsia against reaction, a fight that does not remain confined to what is commonly known as bourgeois democracy, but gets intertwined with the fight for socialism.
>
> People's Democracy represents the changed correlation of forces in every country where conditions mature for the isolation of the collaborating bourgeosie in such a way that the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism get intertwined in a single revolutionary struggle. [CPI Second Congress Report 1948: 14]
>
> . . . it is necessary to realise that the period that has opened is not one of stable bourgeois development . . . it is one of deepening crisis, of the disintegration of the imperialist-feudal order. [CPI Second Congress Report 1941:14]

Comintern, which included all the communist parties in the world, the Cominform consisted only of the Russian party, the other six East European parties of the new 'People's Democracies,' and the two mass West European parties of Italy and France. This reflected its purpose: to dragoon the other parties into line to serve as auxiliaries to Russian foreign policy, now locked in global conflict with the West.

Even though this would appear to totally contradict the previous line the emphasis on the democratic nature of the new regime of People's Democracy, rather than the socialist nature of a workers' state, meant that the basic politics of the CPI had not been changed. What had happened was a coup d'etat on the Central Committee, which, as events proved, could be reversed just as smoothly as it had occured. However, Ranadive's theses rejected an all-class alliance in the countryside, and he opposed any alliance with the rich peasants. This of course conflicted with what was happening in Telengana, but because the CPI there was leading an agrarian revolt Ranadive did not criticise it. Indeed he was quite prepared to use the slogan 'Telengana's way is our way' as a stick with which to beat Joshi [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

The Second Congress had been attended by delegates from the Andhra Provincial headquarters. The people in Telengana were not very aware of what was happening in the rest of India and were not very concerned about the change in leadership [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. However, members of the Provincial and District leadership, worried about the implications of Ranadive's policy, were now studying the pamphlet 'On New Democracy' by Mao Tse-Tung. Written in 1940, this spelt out exactly which classes the Communist Party of China was trying to unite and the nature of the state that would be created after the revolution. In fact, all CPI publications about China had been translated into Telugu from the early 1950s. A widely read book on Nationalist China was written by one Srinivas Rao, and a biography of Mao was published. Absorbing this continuous stream of literature on the Chinese Communist Party, cadres in Telengana began to associate what they were doing with the Chinese Revolution [Prasad interview 1979]. This produced the first definite application of Maoist politics in India—the Andhra Letter of June 1948.

It was written by D.V. Rao. Sundarayya, C. Rajeswar Rao, M. Basavapunniah, Chandrasekhar Rao and Hanumantha Rao and was submitted to the Central Committee. It came to the conclusion that the revolutionary struggle had only just begun: and it contradicted Ranadive's big bang theory of insurrection just being around the corner:

> Our revolution in many respects differs from the classical Russian revolution; and is to a great extent similar to that of the Chinese

> Revolution. The perspective is likely not that of general strikes and general rising leading to the liberation of the rural sides; but of the dogged resistance and prolonged civil war in the form of an agrarian revolution culminating in the capture of political power by the democratic front. [Mohan Ram 1969:25]

The "New Democratic Revolution" was against feudalism and imperialism—so there was a four-class strategy to unite workers, all peasants, intellectuals, and the national (*i.e.*, anti-imperialist) bourgeoisie. The theses were not discussed by the Central Committee until September and political documents attacking the Andhra Letter were not published until September. By that time the situation inside Telengana had radically changed with the invasion of the Indian army.

In one document 'On the Agrarian Question in India', the Central Committee under Ranadive's influence not only rejected the rich peasants but also middle peasants as allies of the revolution. In another document—'Struggle for People's Democracy and Socialism —Some questions of Strategy and Tactics'—Ranadive accused the Andhra party of being dominated by rich and middle peasants, who were therefore under the influence of rich peasant ideology, which was why they had adopted the multi-class strategy. He neglected to mention that this still applied to the CPI as a whole, and certainly to the leadership of which he was the most prominent member. The Andhra Provincial Committee did not engage in a discussion on a wider scale because of the authoritarian internal regime of the party which demanded that discussion could only take place between leading committees [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

In fact Ranadive's insurrectionary line very quickly ran into the sand, with disastrous results for the CPI's industrial organisation. He had totally overestimated the strength that the CPI possessed inside the working class and had also misanalysed the actual situation and balance of class forces inside India. The CPI-led unions launched a series of adventurist actions, which ended in severe defeats for the workers and repression for the CPI, as it was banned in State after State. But I would suggest that neither his formulations nor the 'New Democracy' perspective of the Andhra Provincial Committee tackled what was becoming a central problem of the Telengana movement, because of the absence in the political

traditions of the CPI of a crucial part of the experience of the international workers' movement—the concept of Dual Power.

Telengana—Half way to Dual Power?

Dual Power is a state of affairs which exists during an extreme political crisis, when revolution becomes a real possibility. The term was first used to describe the situation that existed in Russia between February and October 1917 after the overthrow of Czarism and before the Bolshevik Revolution, when there were two sources of power in Russia—the Provisional Government and the Soviets of Soldiers and Workers Deputies. In fact Dual Power as a condition of social crisis was not unique to Russia in 1917, but has occurred in various forms at most times of revolutionary conflict. Although the essence of class society is that the ruling class determines the political and economic structure of that society, the oppressed and exploited classes are constantly challenging this domination and may be able to secure some modifications (reforms) in their own favour, without upsetting the basic domination of the ruling class.

The ruling class may consist of more than one element, such as in Imperial Germany where the Junkers, the Prussian aristocrats, shared power with the industrial bourgeoisie, or in independent India, where capitalist farmers (the erstwhile 'rich peasants'), the industrial bourgeoisie and the state capitalist bourgeoisie also share power. The point is that these groups make up a joint social base, and are therefore unified in a single state. It does not constitute Dual Power, for there is only one government, only a single source of authority. To quote Leon Trotsky, the first to formulate the theory of Dual Power:

> The two-power regime arises only out of irreconcilable conflicts—is possible therfore, only in a revolutionary epoch, and constitutes one of its fundamental elements.
>
> . . . no historic class lifts itself from a subject position suddenly in one night . . . it must already on the eve of the revolution have assumed a very different independent attitude towards the official ruling class . . . The historic preparation of a revolution brings about, in the pre-revolutionary period, a situation in which the class which is called to realise the new social system, although not yet master of the country, has actually concent-

> rated in its hands a significant share of the state power, while the official apparatus of the government is still in the hands of the old lords. That is the initial dual power in every revolution. [Trotsky 1965:223-224]

Admittedly the situation in Telengana was far from identical with that in Russia after February 1917. The revolt was confined exclusively to the rural areas, and despite the fact that it was being conducted on a very militant basis it still retained a very large amount of Popular Front politics, especially in the key issues of the composition of the village committees. Nevertheless, in Nalgonda especially, there existed a situation where the Nizam's government could only exercise any authority by sending raiding parties out of fortified and isolated camps. The normal administration did not exist. Authority over territory encompassing over 1,000 villages was now exercised by the village (*gram raj*) committees.

Apart from the question of land distribution and the disposition of confiscated farm implements, the committees also dealt with the miantenance of local irrigation works, and ensuring that proper credit facilities were available to the peasants. They looked after the families of members of the permanent guerilla squads. Prior to the movement the *deshmukhs* used to settle family and other village disputes, at a price. Now the committees superseded them in this respect as well. 'People's Courts' were convened to deal with particularly evil landlords, local officials, their hoodlums. Usually this meant hauling them up before an assembly of the whole village [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Retrospectively he does portray the *gram raj* committees as alternative sources of authority:

> . . . when the peasantry comes forward to seize land and takes up arms to defend it under the leadership of a revolutionary peasant committee, the latter becomes the embryonic organ of power. [D.V. Rao 1974-23]

Now although a Dual Power situation in this sense existed over a wide area in Telengana, the major difference with Russia was not of a social nature, but the fact that there was no revolutionary workers' party. The Bolshevik Party consisted of a large core of tried and tested workers, leaders in their own workplaces, and armed with the political perspectives of Lenin. The CPI, on the

other hand, was a swamp, with a bevy of contradictory tendencies. This showed itself in the fact that there was no clarity as to the way forward for the movement. The Andhra Letter envisaged a protracted struggle, but there was no decision on what attitude should be taken towards the Congress government. On the one hand CPI policy was still for accession to the Indian Union, on the other the Second Congress of the CPI had virtually declared war on Nehru's government.

This confusion produced a bizarre incident in May 1948. On May 4 the Nizam's government lifted the ban on the CPI, and the Hyderabad City Committee of the party issued a statement which denounced accession as an imperialist plot and called for Azad (Free) Hyderabad [Sundarayya 1972:179]. They were swiftly denounced by the Provincial Committee, but the Indian government used this statement to make much propaganda that the CPI was in league with the Nizam. The point is that the City Committee were obviously confused as to what they were supposed to be doing, and took the change of line of the Second Congress to mean that everything opposed by the Congress government had to be supported. Therefore they had to support an independent Hyderabad.

This was an incredibly mechanical application of the policy, since it meant lining up with now openly fascist Razakars. What it does clearly reveal is the very low level of political consciousness on one of the leading CPI committees in Hyderabad. Possibly it was a reflection that many of the leading party members in Hyderabad city came from a Muslim background, and were therefore susceptible to idea of Hyderabad's uniqueness. It certainly was a reflection on the lack of clarity in CPI politics in making a distinction between their politics and those of other social classes. There had been a large increase in workers' struggles at the end of 1946. But the very people who had been leading these struggles were those who had been pushing for alliances with the 'progressives' in the Congress. Sundarayya laments the lack of solidarity from the workers for the movement, but the workers' revolt had been emasculated by the alliance with the State Congress, which had meant being crushed along with it. In such circumstances the line of 'Azad Hyderabad' was merely icing on the cake.

The strength of the movement in Nalgonda lay in its independence, organisational and political, from the nationalists. For although the Communists in Nalgonda never in fact jettisoned Popu-

lar Front politics, the basis of their support was increasingly becoming agricultural labourers and poor peasants. As the movement developed, the demand for land had become so strong that the CPI were obliged to introduce a land ceiling. In the beginning 200 acres was decided on. This was extremely high, as it would leave out most of the village landlords. When the pressure from the rural poor grew, who were after all the people who were doing most of the fighting, the ceiling was reduced in mid-1948 to 100 dry acres or 10 wet acres as the limit for a joint family. Before these decisions could be implemented the Police Action intervened [Sundarayya 1972:117].

In retrospect, the CPI threw away a great opportunity in 1946-47. This was a very real tragedy for the workers and peasants involved, as thousands of them suffered horribly and died. On a wider scale, it meant a decisive defeat for the workers' movement in India. If the communists in the rest of Hyderabad had shown the same initiative, determination and gut affiliation to basic communist principles as did their comrades in Nalgonda (despite everything that has been said about their Popular Frontism), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Nizam's regime would have collapsed during 1947. For even though they had defeated the workers, and the State Congress, the Nizam's regime had totally lost control inside Nalgonda and was on the defensive even in those of Telengana where the CPI was not engaged in an agrarian revolt but had lined up behind the nationalist petty landlords and rich peasants in fighting for accession. Even though the Razakars had managed to terrorise Marathwada and Karnataka into submission, the regime was so rotten that it could not have survived a concerted assualt.

In reality there was indecision and no one gave a lead. The logic of the situation was pushing the communists into a struggle for state power. The alternative to vacillating would have been an initiative to topple the regime. The CPI was completely unprepared for this, but it could hardly have resulted in anything worse than what actually happened. The Nizam's regime was starved of modern arms and ammunition, and subject to an economic blockade from India. In the summer of 1948 the raids into Nalgonda were at such a low level that free movement was possible [D.V. Rao interview 1947]. Given those conditions an offensive could only have improved the situation. While much of the strength of the workers and peasants had been dissipated, the fact is that for four months prior

to the invasion of the Indian army the communists allowed themselves to drift along with events, even though there was widespread speculation about an Indian intervention. In this way they threw away the gains that they had made since 1945, since Dual Power is an inherently unstable situation, and has to be resolved one way or the other.

9 The Police Action and the End of Independent Hyderabad

When India became independent a States Ministry was formed to deal with the integration of the 500-odd princely states into the Indian Union. The minister in charge was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the second most powerful figure in the Congress after Nehru, and an arch-conservative. Patel's policy towards the states involved them signing an Instrument of Accession and a Standstill Agreement. This latter gave the Indian government authority to act for the state in the matters of defence, foreign affairs, and communications, while otherwise freezing the situation for a year. In fact most of the states appointed Congress-led governments soon after acceding.

As we saw earlier, the Nizam's regime in Hyderabad refused to do either. For several months intractable negotiations continued in New Delhi over signing a Standstill Agreement. These were conducted on the Hyderabad side mainly by the Nawab of Chhatari, Prime Minister for the second time, and Sir Walter Monckton, the Nizams's personal legal adviser. Chhatari was never a very imposing figure, and he was certainly aware that the Government of the United Provinces, where he was a large landowner, had been making thinly veiled threats that his property would be confiscated if he pursued the cause of independent Hyderabad with great vigour. He was unpopular with the Ittehad for his vacillation and for being an outsider, and he did not improve his popularity when the one native Hyderabadi he appointed to the negotiating team was Ali Yavar Jung, disliked by the Ittehad as a liberal [Mir Laik Ali 1962:61-62]. Eventually Chhatari came to the conclusion that he would get no more from the Indian government and on November 25 recommended signing of the Standstill Agreement.

The Nizam accepted on the 27th and the delegation was due to return to New Delhi the next day to sign the agreement. During the night the Ittehad staged a coup d'etat. They mobilised 30,000 people who surrounded the houses of Chhatari, Monckton and the rest of the delegation, and prevented them from leaving. This action

parachuted the Ittehad into power. The Nizam realised that any regime that was based on communal supremacy and an independent Hyderabad could only exist by permission of the Ittehad [Mir Laik Ali 1962:63]. Swiftly a new delegation was appointed headed by a leading figure in the Ittehad, Moin Nawaz Jung. Chhatari resigned, and the Ittehad then set about organising the Razakars. Like the German and Italian ruling classes before them, the Nizam, his aristocracy, and the bureaucracy had come to realise that their survival meant handing over power to a fascist para-military party.

There can be little doubt that the Ittehad had developed into a fascist party. Despite protestations to the contrary by Mir Laik Ali, the Ittehad did go around instituting programmes against their political opponents, mainly in the Hindu community, but also against any Muslims who openly opposed them. Their depredations were worse in Marathwada and Karnataka, where there was not the resistance that there was in Telengana. The Ittehad leader Kasim Razvi went around making a series of vitriolic speeches, such as the time he said that he would raise the Nizam's flag over the Red Fort in Delhi [Munshi 1957:36]. Even an apologist like Mir Laik Ali had to admit that 50-60,000 Hindus fled to India during this time [Mir Laik Ali 1962:81]. The Ittehad also attempted to entice Muslims to migrate to Hyderabad from surrounding areas in South India in order to alter the communal balance in the state. The Ittehad represented the only solution that was left to the Nizam's regime in its bid for independence—the solution by violence. But this meant submitting to the Ittehad's concept of what that independent state would be—a state dominated by the Muslim petty bourgeoisie through its political organ—the Ittehad.

The new government formed after the coup was quite clearly dominated by the Ittehad. The cabinet included five members of the Ittehad, plus one Venkatrao, who led a pro-Ittehad untouchable group, a rather ineffectual businessman called Joshi, Mallikajumar, a member of the Lingayat community, and a member of the State Congress faction hostile to Tirtha, Ramachar. In the manner of governments created after coups, they were essentially window-dressing, but showed the way in which the regime was prepared to play the communal card against the Congress. Mir Laik Ali, who had been chairman of the Hyderabad Construction Company and had been in charge of the food procurement programme, and who was also very closely linked with government circles in Pakistan

became Prime Minister. His deputy was a malleable old aristocrat, Pingli Venkatrama Reddy [Munshi 1957:68].

Mir Laik Ali was fairly representative of that sort of contractor/ financier which surrounds autocratic regimes. His personal fortune was based on government contracts and his own political ideas, expressed many years later, still showed a total acceptance of the official view of the Congress: getting rid of the British was the only unifying factor:

> Otherwise, the distrust between the various communities which constituted the teeming millions of the sub-continent and indeed the inherent hatred of the down-trodden Hindu low castes would never sustain the size or force of that political body. [Mir Laik Ali 1962:29].

In fact the new delegation found that they could get no more concessions from the Indian government than their predecessors. Eventually the Standstill Agreement was signed on November 29th. Like the others, it gave the Indian government control of foreign affairs, defence and communications. The internal authority of the Nizam's government remained intact.

The Dictatorship of the Ittehad

The Standstill Agreement was supposed to freeze the situation for a year while a permanent solution could be negotiated. A part of the agreement was that both parties would appoint an Agent-General in the others' capital. The Indian government made its intentions plain by appointing as its agent K.M. Munshi, a former minister in Bombay Presidency. Munshi was well-known as an obsessive Hindu chauvinist, and as a sycophantic admirer of the Home and States Minister. He also had an inflated notion of his own abilities and importance, and was prone to making bombastic pronouncements. To cap it all, he insisted on occupying the former British residency at Bolarum, just outside Hyderabad. This was calculated to show that the Indian government considered that they had inherited the British relationship with Hyderabad, and that they had no intention of 'negotiating' anything but the accession of Hyderabad on their own terms at the earliest possible moment.

Since the Nizam's government was now dominatee by the Ittehad there was never any chance of them agreeing to any kind of

accession. In this situation, negotiations became a joke. The new government in Hyderabad banned the export of precious metals to India and declared that the Indian rupee was no longer legal tender [Menon 1956:338]. In addition they negotiated a Rs 200 million crore loan with the government of Pakistan, through the Pakistani Finance Minister Ghulam Mohammad, who previously had been approached to become Prime Minister of Hyderabad. This calculated act of defiance in negotiating with a hostile state made reprisals inevitable. All Hyderabad securities in India were frozen, and the export of gold, silver, jewellery and currency to Hyderabad was prohibited [Menon 1956:371]. Since the Hyderabad economy had become increasingly integrated with that of India during the war, the Indian government found it a simple matter to impose other sanctions by cutting off the supply of arms and ammunition and by restricting the shipping of essential goods such as oil. While there was fighting in Kashmir and the possibility of a general conflict with Pakistan they could do no more.

With this going on and with the recent history of the communal massacres during Partition it was not difficult for the Ittehad to whip up trouble. Thousands of Muslims from surrounding Indian provinces, caught up in the general panic, fled to Hyderabad. They spent a few wretched months in improvised camps, their main employment being as cannon-fodder for the Ittehad. The Razakars, now free from all restraints, unleashed even more ferocious assaults on their opponents. For instance, after a speech made by their ally Venkatrao at Bidar in January 1948, attacking caste Hindus, 129 villages were razed in Bidar district between the months of February and May. In the face of this the State Congress folded up. In December Tirtha had come to the conclusion that it was necessary to end the *satyagraha*. Released by Mir Laik Ali as a 'gesture of goodwill,' he went to Madras and set about organising State Congress members who had fled there into a 'Committee of Action,' which spent most of its time issuing statements [Gour 1973:86-87]. Many of the rural rich, fleeing the Telengana movement, had joined refugees from the Razakar terror. Munshi summed it up:

> The Congress influence was waning. Quite a few thousand workers were in jail. Bindu, Melkote and M. Ramachandra Rao kept up some splendid activities, but the effective control in the

> border areas had passed into the hands of the communists. [Munshi 1957:137-138].

The State Congress groups based in the provinces of Bombay and Madras kept up sporadic border raiding through the first nine months of 1948. The Razakars did the same thing in the other direction. What worried Munshi were the activities of the Communist Party:

> On February 19th he found the situation:
> . . . very disturbing. Unless the Razakars were liquidated the Communists would continue to grow in strength and acquire a greater strangle-hold over the Telugu-speaking districts and areas. At the same time, the Nizam's government would continue to grow weak and in the end the Communists would obtain a complete hold over Andhra. [Munshi 1957:133].

It is not certain that the Indian government was of the same opinion. They seem to have been more concerned with danger of Hyderabad triggering communal conflict in south aud central India. The Communist Party, on the other hand, was more concerned that the Indian government was going to do a deal with the Nizam that would leave his power largely intact. At the end of February its press was accussing the Congress thus:

> The vacillating and anti-people policies of the local state Congress and the treacherous attitude of the States Department of the Government of India have helped and abetted the Nizam. [People's Age 29.2.48].

After the Second Congress of the CPI and Ranadive's victory relations between the Communist Party and the State Congress deteriorated rapidly. The Action Committee replied by accussing the communists of attacking State Congress members and of forcibly collecting contributions from villages. People's Age responded by citing instances where State Congress members had come to the aid of landlords [People's Age 28.3.48].

The CPI: Confusion of objectives

The Communist Party and the Andhra Mahasabha were in fact now becoming virtually indistiguishable from each other. As the struggle became more like a civil war than a movement for reforms the programmes of the two organisations became, to all practical purposes, dentical. Separate mention of the Andhra Mahasabha disappears from almost all accounts during the first half of 1948.

Actually the virtual merging of the CPI into the Andhra Mahasabha produced a very serious problem for the communists. From 1945 the CPI had wished to demarcate itself from the Andhra Mahasabha, and did produce leaflets under its own name. But because of their desire to avoid being banned, in practice most CPI members used the Andhra Mahasabha plateform for their activity and separate CPI activity ceased, apart from the functioning of party committees. The problem with this was that the distinction between party members and non-members became blurred and in a number of occasions vanished. Because of the nature of the Andhra Mahasabha Popular Front approach a number of small landlords and rich peasants were thus able to effectively penetrate the party. This had dire results after the Police Action, when large numbers of them defected [Prasad interview 1979]. What also meant was that above the village level the only organisations were those of the Communist Party itself.

Now it is possible to see how this came about. Apart from the fact that the CPI needed a cover and so had part of its programme absorbed into that of the Andhra Mahasabha, the nature of that programme itself propelled the two organisations into a convergence. For although on paper the Andhra Mahasabha programme was reformist enough—no forced labour, illegal exactions, evictions, etc.—in reality they meant a social revolution—the overthrow of the *deshmukhs*. More than that—by pursuing this 'reformist' programme, by 1948 the peasants and workers of Telengana found themselves usurping the property, functions and power of the state as well. In this situation it is not surprising that the overtly 'revolutionary' organisation usurped the 'reformist' one. The irony and contradiction was that the revolutionaries were still shackled to the basic conception of Popular Front politics.

However, during the first eight months of 1948 the Telengana peasants prosecuted their war against the Nizam's regime with great energy and success. One of the main advantages enjoyed by the

government's forces and the Razakars was the near monopoly of communists and transport facilities, and so these became priority targets. On the night of February 26-27th a series of twenty co-ordinated attacks destroyed railway track on six different sections. At the same time telephone and telegraph poles were uprooted and new bridges built to support armoured cars were destroyed [People's Age 21.3.48]. In the villages and local defence squads began to dig anti-vehicle trenches around the perimeters, and began to build road-blocks and destroy bridges. The army responded by forcing villagers to fill in holes in the roads and sometimes shot them down afterwards. In a series of battles for the destruction of the main road between Jangaon and Suryapet 60 people were killed in this way and buried in the road itself. This was not enough to stop thirteen miles of road from being destroyed. When traffic did run they placed planks with nails driven into them on the road which punctured tyres and made moving by road very risky [Sundarayya 1972:95-96].

The Nizam's regime reacted by intensifying its military operations and its repression by opening more armed camps. So the main military operations were then directed against these camps. In most cases the squads did not possess sufficient fire-power to actually destroy the camps (they had nothing larger than sub-machine guns), although at Kodakandla in Jangaon taluqa the camp was destroyed after house-to-house fighting in the village a large number of weapons were captured [Sundarayya 1972:101-102]. But even when attacks did not manage to destroy the camps they severally affected the troops' morale and restricted their ability to operate. As usual in such wars the troops depended heavily on informers for much of their success. Most of the leading cadres mentioned as being killed [Sundarayya 1972:103-112] were the victims of betrayal and overwhelming force. But the Nizam's regime was finding it almost impossible to maintain an effort which could retain effective control over Nalgonda and the surrounding areas.

The Communist Party managed to get a medical team together through sympathetic doctors in Hyderabad and Vijayawada. Apart from securing medical supplies, some doctors worked in the liberated areas, rending the wounded and training medical orderlies. In May 1948 these medical teams had to deal with a cholera outbreak on their own, all vestiges of the official administration having long since vanished. They managed to control it successfully by means

of drugs smuggled in from hospitals in Hyderabad [Gour 1973:155] Their organisations had reached such a pitch that they even had organized a separate ward in Vijayawada General Hospital for wounded guerrillas.

In April People's Age could say:

> In the 2,000 villages, the will of the Nizam does not exist. It is the People's Courts, composed of peasants, that dispense law and justice; people's enemies are punished; land is given to the tiller and effective steps are taken to curb the exploitation of the landlords.
>
> In these areas the peasants have forged a new weapon of power, embodying their own sovereignity. They have been able to do so on the basis their armed resistance to the Nizam's police and hireling goondas.
>
> The armed defence of the agrarian revolution is producing before our eyes a new state in which the political and economic power belongs directly to the masses and not to the cheats from the upper classes. [People's Age 11.4.48].

Now this last paragraph undoubtedly reflected Ranadive's interpretation of what he hoped was going on in Telengana so that it would fit his perspective of an immediate revolution in India. It certainly did not reflects what was going in Telengana. As was seen before (Ch. VIII) the *gram raj* committees were indeed distributing land, acting as local courts and generally superceding the local administration of Hyderabad State. What they did not constitute was an alternative state in the sense of an overall authority in society as a whole. Their only connections with each other were through the various levels of the Communist Party. Unlike the Russian Revolution there was no central body like the All-Russian Congress of the Soviets, nor was there ever any move to set up such a body. This meant that the movement's overall direction was directly and soley determined by the Communist Party apparatus rather by the Telengana masses themselves. This was a fatal flaw, since every vacillation, compromise and confusion of the Communist Party nationally was reproduced throughout the movement, with no possibility of any correction.

Dual Power was in fact mentioned in the Andhra Letter [D.V. Rao interview 1974] but what it meant was not clearly understood.

Some people wanted to continue the agrarian struggle, although with no clear idea about the objective, while some thought that the struggle would end after the Congress took over following a compromise with the Nizam [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Most of the leading cadres did not actually see the problem occurring. From the beginning they had mostly been fighting for accession and just thought that the moment would keep on expanding until the Nizam collapsed, coupled with the rather contradictory thought that the Indian government would not intervene because it did not want another stale-mate like Kashmir [Ravi Narayan Reddy interview 1973]. Caught between the party's habitual compromising politics and Ranadive's triumphalism most of the CPI cadres were hoplessly confused as to what was going to happen and what they should do if the Indian army invaded.

Accession or Power?

In the debate conducted by leaning members of the Andhra Committee some 25 years after the event, Sundarayya effectively characterized the struggle as one for accession, that is, with a democratic rather than a revolutionary purpose:

> . . . the Telengana movement developed from small partial demands to partisan armed struggled to enforce these demands and later it also developed into an armed struggle to overthrow Nizam's rule itself. The *gram raj* committees were in fact organs of struggle, and, at the same time, organs of power. But with the Indian army's entry and merger of Hyderabad state into the Indian Union, a difference state, with an entirely different correlation of class forces came into existence. So the liberation struggle against the Nizam could not become automatically transferred into a liberation struggle against the Nehru government of the Indian state. Sundarayya 1972:119-120].

Now it would have been one thing if he had argued that the power of the Indian ruling class was immeasurably greater than that of Hyderabad and that the Telengana movement ought to have retreated in the face of it. It was quite another to suggest that the class nature of the struggle would be transformed if the Nizam were replaced by the Indian government, since the latter had no intention of overthrowing the *deshmukhs*. It would be perverse to

suggest that the class nature of landlords would change simply because the Nizam was replaced by a Congress government. The people now in the split CPI are at least consistent. They now say that the movement should have been limited to accession [Ravi Narayan Reddy, Raj Bahadur Gour, Rajeswar Rao]. Sundarrayya and the Communist Party (Marxist), have put themselves in a rather strange position by claiming that it was an agrarian movement which should have been called off at accession because of 'changed class forces.'

To assert today, in retrospect, that what was going on in Telangana was about accession and not about power is a little ridiculous. By the middle of 1948 the *gram raj* committee were beginning to control prices and deal with indebtedness. Initially debts were abolished, but then they found that rich peasants, a major source of funds in the villages, would no longer give loans. So the District Committee decided that loans and credits should be allowed with fixed rates of interest and Districts Committee guaranteeing repayment. This regulating of economic relations, whatever its nature, was all to do with power. It also showed the weakness of the movement, in that the decision was taken by a Communist Party body rather than an organisation of the peasants themselves. The CPI also fixed agricultural labourers' wages but neglected to organize the workers themselves [Prasad interview 1979]. This was the terrible contradiction—there was a struggle for power but the living class organs on which alone a new state could be based were not there. Instead the CPI substituted itself for the peasants and workers, without seeing anything wrong in this.

However, in the short term the measures on credit lead to greater prosperity than had ever been experienced, even though there was fighting going on. There was a considerable expansion of production, and merchants in most cases co-operated with the prices and credit regulations [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

The movement had also begun to have an effect on the social and cultural relations of the masses. To a certain extent the CPI cadres saw themselves as bringing 'culture' to them [D.V. Rao interview 1974], by which they meant that they had been subjected to a humiliating existence with all respect totally denied to them by the *deshmukhs* and officials. Part of the programme in the liberated areas was a literacy programme which was certainly the first time that the peasants and workers would have had any chance of learn-

ing to read and write. Illiteracy had been one of the instruments and symbols of their degradation—now they were acquiring skills that been the preserve of their rulers.

Under the pressure of breaking social relations with the landlords and the state changes began to appear in the way in which people conducted their personal relations. Theiving decreased, in general there was no looting and all confiscated crops and goods were handed over to the *gram raj* committees [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. But one striking way in which the movement changed behaviour was the huge rise in the self-confidence of women, as was noticed by a visiting journalist [Thaper 1948:31]. But although women were elected to *gram raj* committees and some women worked with the squads with traditional attitude towards women and their habitual role persisted. Narasamma, a cadre recruited towards the end of the moment, put it like this:

> We women are still being looked upon with the old outlook that we are inferior. Any slip or mistake we commit, our leaders come down very heavily on us It becomes a subject of open gossip and scandal. We must be guided and improved, not derided If we move a little freely, we are watched with suspicion. Why have you not allowed any women to participate in actual guerrilla raids on the enemy? [Sundarayya 1972:347-348]

In fact considerable numbers of women did engage in battles with troops and Razakars [see for instance Sundarayya 1972:335-344]. One women managed to rise to membership of an Area Committee (Swarajyam in Manukota). Given that before the movement the culture predominating in Telengana can best be described as feudal, the reforms initiated by the moment, which were essentially those of a bourgeois nature, were in that reality, progressive. Banning child marriage, legitimising divorce and re-marriage are certainly contrary to orthodox Indian social morality and have certainly not been eliminated since 1947.

However, a movement of such dynamism produces extraordinarily rapid movements in consciousness amongst the participants, which often races ahead of the most advanced communists, let alone the Popular Front dominated CPI of the 1940s. For example:

> In the course of their campaign, our squads met many women in small groups. They narrated their sufferings and our women cadres in the squads condemned the present superstitions and encouraged them to fight back against their sufferings. But instead of bringing out the point that their sufferings arose mainly from the social system, and the Government that maintained it, there was a tendency to attribute them mainly to the menfolk. One woman, after our squads exhortation, went to the extent of declaring that she would make her husband cook the food. The leadership pointed out now this approach would only lead to domestic trouble, instead of the women being drawn into the fight against the present social and political system. [Sundarayya 1972: 573]

Now attitudes such as this are not the prerogative of the CPI. They infect the left all over the world. The acceptance of the definitions of social relations of capitalism persist in organisations whose members profess to have broken from reformism. In a sense this incident is just another example of consciousness making vast leaps in a short period of time and breaking through the well of 'natural' social relations—and of how incapable revolutionaries are of dealing with it.

In all these aspects, though, the movement had clearly passed through being just a struggle for reforms or a revolt. As I argued before, it was to a certain extent a situation of Dual Power and if the CPI had possessed an understanding of revolutionary politics it could have developed further. It did not do so. The radical agrarian movement was confined to Nalgonda and adjoining areas of Warangal. 70% of all land that was redistributed was done so in Nalgonda. When the District Committee tried to produce a leaflet on how to redistribute land they were again thwarted by the CPI's bureaucratic internal regime. They were not allowed to have direct contact with any other district committee, so fifty copies of the leaflet had to be sent to the Provincial Committee office in Vijyawada on the coast and then sent up again to Telengana [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. In such a situation any attempt to generalize the struggle was impossible.

In the rest of the state the Razakars and the regime's troops were able to bludgeon opposition into the ground. As a Communist Party writer put it:

> The widespread Razakar terror had made any activity inside Marathwada impossible . . . the active ranks of the Congress were squeezed out and had organized themselves into border camps. Gour 1973:134].

From these camps Congress supporters, along with CPI members, attacked customs posts and burnt officials records. The Razakars responded and so there continued an irregular and bitter border war until September. There had developed a great unevenness in struggle, not only between Hyderabad and the rest of India, nor just between Telengana and the rest of Hyderabad, but between Nalgonda and the rest of Hyderabad. The full effects of this were soon to become apparent.

The Fall of the Regime

While the Communist Party cadres grappled with an unforseen situation that was largely of their own making the Nizam's regime stumbled towards its final crisis. Throughout 1948 the desultory negotiations had continued with no chance of wither side shifting enough for an agreement to be concluded, despite the hysteria of the CPI press. Indeed, some people in the government obviously were as worried by the Telengana movement as they were by the Nizam. At the beginning of August 1948 Munshi sent a long report to Patel about the activities of the CPI:

> This involves a double problem, the problem of liquidating the Razakars as well as the Communists in Hyderabad. The first is easy, but the second is allied with the problem of the whole South India and connected with the Communist policy in South East Asia. Though Hyderabad is the immediate problem, the whole Communist infiltration in South India would prove a danger to the National Government if not firmly and thoroughly handled. [Durga Das 1973:201]

What Munshi had in mind was the widespread CPI agitation in the Andhra coastal districts of Madras state, remembering that the CPI had a long-standing policy for a united Andhra state. Although there were still scares in circulation about the threat posed to the stability of central and south India by the Nizam's regime (in June the Madras renier was writing to Patel about Pakistani support for the

Nizam), the regime was in fact on its last legs. The economic sanctions had led to rationing and various sorts of improvisations like alcohol plants producing synthetic gasoline [Mir Laik Ali 1962:231]. The arms blockade meant that the government had to buy arms direct on the international market and smuggle them in by air at night from Karachi or Goa in Portuguese India. Their main operator in this business was an Australian gun-runner called Sydney Cotton who flew a converted Lancaster bomber out of Karachi. But only a small part of their requirements could be fulfilled in this way.

In spite of much lurid propaganda about the strength of the Nizam's armed forces and the mythical 'Peacock Squadron' of Lancaster bombers based in Egypt—or Pakistan—or Arabia—the Hyderabad army was very badly equipped. They possessed only two batteries of modern artillery and one squadron of armoured cars, with just four rounds of ammunition each [interview with ex-soldier 1974]. The army commander, General El-Edroos, possessed an inflated reputation and, as it proved, no backbone. They had no air force at all. So although the Razakars stepped up their terrorism as 1948 went on it was the violence of blind despair, of the gangster on the run. They were especially violent to Muslims who opposed them, which culminated in the particularly brutal murder of Sheobullah Khan, editor of the paper Imrooz, on August 22.

By this time the regime had almost run its course. An attempt by the Nizam to get rid to Laik Ali at the beginning of August failed, and the regime decided to place its last hope on a campaign for international rccognition. There were information offices established in the UK and USA with the purpose of getting support for the Hyderabad case to be referred to the Security Council of the United Nations. The Indian government, however, had decided to settle the question by force. The situation in Kashmir vis-a-vis Pakistan had etablished by the middle of 1948 and forces could be spared for the operation against Hyderabad. After June the Indian government made no more serious attempts at negotiation and by September when the Hyderabad delegation left for the United Nations it was obvious that a crisis had been reached. On September 10 the Indian government issued an ultimatum demanding that their troops be allowed to re-occupy the cantonments which they had vacated in August 1947 and that the Razakars should be suppressed [Munshi 1957:215]. The internal security situation was cited

as a justification. Patel put the Indian government's official position to the Constituent Assembly:

> We cannot let our attachment to peace ruin the future of India or of those territories that fall by geographical connection within that description. The campaign of murder, arson and loot going on in Hyderabad rouses communal passion in India and jeopardizes the peace of the Domination. The so-called lapse of paramountcy cannot alter the organic interrelation of Hyderabad and India and the mutual obligations of the one to the other. [Durga Das 1973:236-237].

This is what the Congress had always believed. Now that they had the force available to put their wishes into effect they were certainly going to do so. Hardly surprisingly the Nizam's government did not repond to the ultimatum.

On September 12 Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Governor-General of Pakistan died. The death of leading Muslim separatist politician of the sub-continent was an important psychological blow to the Hyderabad government, because their last-ditch hope was that Jinnah would not let the 'Islamic State' of Hyderabad founder under the Indian army. There was never any real chance that Pakistan would have come to the aid of the Nizam, and in any case the geographical situation made it a practical impossibility. However, Jinnah's death paralysed the Pakistani administration sufficiently to dispose of the chance of even a token demonstration by the Pakistani army. On September 15 the Indian army entered Hyderabad from four directions—this was the 'Police Action', phrase used in the post-war atmosphere which made old fashioned invasion a dirty word.

The campaign itself was almost farcical. Outnumbered, bereft of armour, artillery and air support the Hyderabad army was outmanouvered and shot to pieces by the Indian columns. The Razakars, even less prepared for facing a regular army then they were for the Telengana peasants, were gunned down wherever they tried to make a fight of it. The army command in Hyderabad city was paralysed when El-Edroos took to his bed in panic. On September 17, after only four days fighting, resistance had practically collapsed. The Nizam went on the radio to announce his capitulation and the Laik Ali government resigned [Munshi 1957:226]. A military govern-

ment was installed and the leaders of the previous regime, including Kasim Razvi, were arrested. In the Security Council the debate had in fact just begun when the surrender became known. It dragged on for some weeks afterwards and although a number of delegates criticised India for aggression everyone realised that this was a charade as no-one was going to lift a finger for the Nizam now. The pretensions of the 'Faithful Ally' ended in low diplomatic farce. All the plans of the officials, founded on the shifting sands of the Hyderabad ruling class, had vanished overnight.

Along with the Telengana peasants everybody except the supporters of the old regime felt a great wave of elation and relief at the sudden collapse of the Nizam. But this was precisely the time when the flaws in the politics of the Communist Party became important. The vacillations and confusions concerning the aims of the movement now became crucial, and the scene was set for a terrible tragedy. The Telengana peasants were not to know it yet but their troubles had hardly begun.

10 The Indian Government's Offensive

As might be deduced from the preceding discussion, the reaction of the local CPI units to the advancing Indian forces was notable for its inconsistency. In many places outside Nalgonda, where CPI activity had been almost exclusively around the demand for accession and not for agrarian demands, crowds of people welcomed the Indian forces and squads surrendered their weapons. Many others, however, were not quite so precipitate or under the influence of local landlords. They buried their arms and dispersed to their home villages while awaiting new instructions from the Provincial Committee [Giri Prasad, B. Yella Reddy interviews 1974].

Many other squads in the agrarian movement areas did neither of these things but harried in Nizam's forces, who were running away rather than retreating. They seized large quantities of arms, ammunition and grain. Five thousand people converged on the mansion of the *deshmukh* Janareddy Pratapreddy in Suryapet and burnt it to the ground [Sundarayya 1972:182]. At Tatikonda in Warangal district the *deshmukh* Y. Sesha Reddy had had armed police camped in his mansion for many months. They had been pinned down by local groups, with snipers shooting police sleeping on his roofs. After the Police Action two squads attacked the mansion and literally smoked them out. Sesha Reddy commited suicide, while his brother Raghava Reddy escaped into the village. He was discovered by the villagers and killed in the streets [Prasad interview 1979]. A number of other landlords suffered a similar fate.

The peasants used the opportunity provided by the collapse of any state power to utterly destroy as many traces of their oppressors as they could and seize their property. The son of the Visnur *deshmukh*, who had perpetrated a particularly vicious series of atrocities could not get away in time and was captured and beaten to death. Razakar camps were tormed and destroyed, although in many cases the Razakars surrendered and were promptly released [Sundarayya 1972:186]. However, wherever the Indian armies turned up they took *deshmukhs* into their protection and drove away the peasants.

One organiser relates how he was almost captured by an army

patrol about a week after the Police Action. The point was that the army was able to penetrate the area of the movement with great ease because most of the peasants did not see them as hostile [Prasad interview 1979]. They say it as the people who had overthrown the Nizam's regime and not as a force who were going to fight for the *deshmukhs*. It was at this time that many Andhra Mahasabha cadres who came from the landlord sections and who were only committed to the anti-Nizam aspect of the movement, quit and defected to the new regime.

The Nalgonda organisation, being involved in the agrarian movement did in contrast make the most out of the temporary confusion. While they did not oppose the military intervention, they gave orders not to dump arms or disband the squads. They then decided on limited demands on the new administration—that the *gram raj* committees should be recognised as *de jure* local administration bodies and that land distribution carried out since 1946 should be ratified. In the period between the fall of the Nizam and the Indian army offensive, which varied from fifteen days to a month, the land distribution programme was vigorously pushed forward. Particular advantage was taken to organize agricultural labourers, especially in the core areas of the movement, the taluqas of Suryapet, Nalgonda, Huzurnagar and Miryalguda. However, the District Committee and so little real confidence that the Indian forces would be prepared to negotiate that a week after the Police Action it instructed all CPI cadres to go to adjacent forest areas for safety [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

When the Indian forces arrived they did not come alone. Riding in their train was a collection of *deshmukhs*, officials and other stalwarts of the former regime. The army demanded that confiscated land should be returned to its 'owners' and prepared to back this up with force. Armed camps reappeared in the Telengana countryside and after a couple of weeks the offensive against the agrarian movement began.

The principal tactic of the army was to surround a group of 10-15 villages, gather everyone together in one place and then conduct house-to-house searches for arms known militants. Not only were all *gram raj* committee members arrested but frequently all adult males over the age of twelve would be arrested as well and carted off to jails in other parts of the state [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. A large proportion of the most experienced cadre

were lost during this period. The total number of people arrested during the first four months of the offensive up to December 1948 was in the order of 10,000 [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Jails and disused barracks all over the state were crammed full with prisoners, compelling the occupying authorities to take new measures for housing their captives.

Repression was not limited to imprisonment. About 500 cadres were killed out of hand during this operation [Sundarayya 1972: 202], and torture, rape, and mutilation were practised indiscriminately in the hope of breaking their morale. A local organizer reported:

> The enemy resorted to atrocities unheard-of even in the Razakar period. Throwing people into thorny and prickly-pear bushes and dancing on them with heavy-shod military boots on, forcing the people to crawl for furlongs in the hot sun, hanging the people upside-down from tree-tops and kicking them like a ball with booted legs, releasing the ropes suddenly from tree-tops, throwing people down to the ground covered with pebbles and stones and road-making material, shaving the heads of women, raping them—these are some of the modes of the enemy's atrocities. [Sundarayya 1972:208-209]

Although the army did not achieve their objective, and met considerable resistance in places, the weight of the offensive had a dramatic effect on the movement and the CPI organisation. It is worth quoting at length a report of local organizer:

> In Tadakamalla zone from the middle of November 1948, the police and military intensified raids. On December 8, along a stretch of 50 miles from Vadapalli to Tadakamalla, 2,000 or more armed personnel were deployed on simultaneous day-and-night raids from the Motekur and Bhimavaram camps. A number of squad members and organizers were arrested and some surrendered. Under terrific torture, some arrested persons gave out certain information. Yet, the morale was high. During these raids, and for a little time afterwards, guerrilla squads took counter action . . . squads destroyed the tobacco crops of the landlords of Bhimavaram and Kamatipuram and distributed the paddy of the landlords of not only these two villages but also

of Topucherla, Medagalapalli, Cheemvarapalli, Pasalpada, Kamassagaram and that of the Babashahabpetet *deshmukhs* to the extent of about 1,000 quintals. In this zone of 50-75 villages, people successfully harvested their crop over 5,000 acres including 1,000 acres of wet lands, which were distributed to them earlier.

The enemy combed zone after zone, arresting en masse militants . . . they resoted to untold atrocities to terrorize the masses and prevent them from giving any shelter or help. Their raids on the Penubadu centre of Suryapet taluqa and on the Cherukapalli and Nakrekallu centres of Nalgonda taluqa forced the squads and organizers to retreat. In the Tadakamalla centre, in the intensified raids the people were forced to accompany the military to comb fields for Party and squad members. The people did not catch us but told us to go away to some shelters for the time being.

We could not stay in the houses in any village because every house was being searched during the raid and any new-comer was being found out with the help of local landlords. We split ourselves into small groups of two or three and mixed ourselves with the people in the fields. The enemy could not locate us at first and they thought that we had all run away from the zone. The village patwaris started collecting taxes but guerrillas shot dead the patwari of Chalamarti. With that, the patels and patwaris refused to return the villages and collect taxes.

But more and more police camps were established closer and closer and the raids increased. We were forced to retreat completely from the zone. After our retreat, the landlords and their agents once again raised their head, and began to point out village cadre to the police. This made a general retreat necessary. [Sundarayya 1972:207-208]

At their greatest strength there were about 50,000 Indian troops operating in Telengana. Unlike the Nizam's forces, they were not subject to morale problems, were much better armed, and could be replaced whenever necessary. But more than technical factors, it was the political reasons that precipitated the retreat. The Telengana movement had not been prepared to face the offensive, certainly outside Nalgonda. This had two major consequences. Firstly, the confusion as to whether they should keep on fighting led to the

disruption of the squads, with some be disbanded and some surrendering. Secondly, there had been no preparations for retreat. The forest areas which had been involved in the movement were mainly in Warangal district where the district leadership did not want to continue the struggle, and just took their squads into the forests to hide until the hue and cry died down [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Thirdly, there had been no consideration of what the party should do in the villages if faced with massive repression.

This meant that the Nalgonda squads who wished to continue resistance, could not use areas which has already been part of the movement. Leaving a minimum number of squads in the plains, with numbers per squad reduced from nine to five or even less, they had to move completely fresh forest areas. Coming suddenly upon totally unprepared tribal people, it usually took the squads about four to six months before they could gain sufficient confidence of the local people to start operations again [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

Even had the retreat been carried out with total efficiency and most of the squad members saved it would have not altered the fact that the movement had suffered a defeat of massive proportions. Over the plains area of Telengana where the movement had been dominant the popular organisations were smashed by the Indian offensive. The *gram raj* committees were swept away, their members imprisoned and the local administration restored. As the local report showed, armed resistance was smothered by the superior numbers of the troops. The movement was now effectively split in two—the masses who had moved themselves and expelled the landlords were now under military occupation while most of the surviving revolutionaries were holed up in the forests. Occassional raids, or infiltrating individuals into villages, would not *by themselves* alter this situation. The conditions were thus created for the imposition of a perspective that would legitimize this separation of the masses from the revolutionaries and so make it impossible for any revival of the movement to take place in the plains.

The Indian military administration did not rely soley on terror to consolidate its rule. Indeed, in respect to the Razakars, whose activities had been the pretext for the Police Action, the word loses all meaning. During the operation the Indian forces detained 15,654 Razakars, of whom two years later only twelve remained in jail. Patel wrote to Nehru in October 1950:

> . . . a very substantial action has been already taken to release persons who were connected with Razakar activities, atrocities, etc., before the Police Action. Practically all the detenus have been released. [Durga Das 1973:269]

In fact Laik Ali managed to avoid justice by his own efforts, making a spectacular if rather easy escape from house arrest in March 1950, and then flying to Pakistan from a deserted airstrip. The previous month the Indian government had finally rehabilitated the Nizam by installing him as Raj Pramukh, or governor, of Hyderabad as a part of the Indian Union. This followed the establishment of a civilian administration under M.K. Vellodi, an ex-civil servant.

To a certain extent the Indian forces and the *deshmukhs* were compelled to compromise on the question of land even at the time of their greatest success. To begin with they did not try to take back waste land that was now being cultivated [B. Yella Reddy interview 1974] but concentrated on the 'surplus' land that had been confiscated and redistributed. This was usually not defended and was the first land to be lost [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. They were playing on the consciousness of the peasant as small producers, the concept of property rights. However, even where this land was recovered only a small proportion of the restored land could be sold. The returning landlords were not so cofident of the power of the government forces that they would risk resuming all of their old practices. The result was that even after the end of the movement in 1951 landlords were not, in general, prepared to carry out large scale evictions [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Many landlords agreed to compromize on distributed land in return for a nominal sum. The new administration was obliged to promise extensive tenancy reform as well as *jagirdari* abolition. This finally materialized in the Hyderabad Tenancy Act of 1950.

The effect of this offensive on the CPI's Popular Front is disputed. Sundarayya claims that in the core areas of Nalgonda rich peasants and small landlords who had supported the movement in the struggle against the Nizam now turned around and shifted their allegiance to the new regime [Sundarayya 1972:257]. D.V. Rao maintains that the only people who defected were small landlords who had managed to get themselves reclassified as rich peasants. The rich peasants did not change sides as a group [D.V. Rao

interview 1974]. In this view what was more serious was that the party line established by Ranadive's victory at the Second Congress was disrupting the front, by characterizing the rich peasants as enemies and forcing them to attack a wider spectrum of the village population, about 10% of the community. The Andhra Provincial Committee's view was that the struggle was still for a democratic rather than a socialist revolution. It was this issue that would now prove crucial not only for the Telengana movement but for the CPI as a whole. The Andhra leadership now disputed with Ranadive and the Central Committee the correct perspective for the Indian revolution.

The Collapse of Ranadive's Policy

During the period of the Indian army's offensive in Telengana Ranadive's policy of instigating an insurrection in the urban areas had not met with success. Far from bringing the Congress regime crashing to the ground, as he had anticipated, it was the CPI organisation that was broken up by a series of strikes that failed to gain mass support. The apotheosis of this policy occurred in March 1 49 when the CPI called a national railway strike against the desires of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, the strike failed to materialize and the communists were expelled from the federation [Mohan Ram 1969:20]. In a situation like this the communist activists found themselves ridiculously exposed and the police had a field day in locking up thousands of CPI members. The party was made illegal in several states (including Hyderabad) and was heavily repressed in the rest. The leadership tried to rescue matters by a series of initiatives in the party's stronghold of West Bengal in the second half of 1949. The results were wretched, culminating in the failure of a national one-day strike in the textile industry in January 1950.

The reasons for this shambles were very basic. Ranadive's policy of identifying the Congress regime and its supporters as puppets of imperialism had the same effect on the working class of India as the 'Third Period' had on the working class in western Europe. Many workers were organized in unions which were under the influence of the Congress and the Socialists. who viewed themselves as the left-wing of the national movement. Ranadive's policy demanded that they should unconditionally reject their organisations and align themselves with the CPI. This ultimatum drive a

great wedge through the organized working class and isolated the communists. It was now they who appeared to be splitting the working class by their adventurist and unilateral actions. In the attempt to overthrow the state the CPI drove half the working class away from them. This was precisely the opposite action required for a successful revolution and revealed the ignorance in the CPI of yet another element of communist politics, the United Front. Ranadive's policy only served to isolate those party members fortunate enough to remain at liberty.

The United Front was a tactic formulated to deal with precisely the situation that confronted the CPI after 1947. To deal with the crisis inside the French Communist Party in the early 1920s, which found itself with the support of a large minority of the French working class (the rest following the social-democrats). Leon Trotsky formulated theses for the Executive Committee of the Comintern. These were later incorporated into specific resolutions on the French situation, but the general principles were meant to have general application:

> . . . whenever the Communist Party already constitutes a big, organized, political force, but not the decisive magnitude; whenever the party embraces organisationally, let us say, one-fourth, one-third, or even a larger proportion of the organized proletarian vanguard, it is confronted with the question of the united front in all its acuteness.
>
> If the party embraces one-third or one-half the proletarian vanguard, then the remaining half or two-thirds are organized by the reformists or centrists.
>
> It is perfectly obvious, however, that even those workers who still support the reformists and centrists are vitally interested in maintaining the highest material standards of living and the greatest possible freedom for struggle. We must consequently so device our tactic as to prevent the Communist Party . . . from turning into—and all the more so, from actually being—-an organisational obstacle in the way of the current struggle of the proletariat. [Trotsky 1972:92-93]
>
> If the Communist Party did not seek for organisational avenues to the end that at every given moment, joint, co-ordinated action between the Communist and non-Communist (including the Social-Democratic) working masses were made possible, it would

> have thereby laid bare its own incapacity to win over—on the basis of mass action—the majority of the working class. [Trotsky 1972:93].

Even had Ranadive been correct in his view that there was no possibility of stable capitalist development (and events were to prove him very wring), to ignore the fact that the majority of the workers were under the domination of the social-democratic wing of the Congress of the Socialists was the crassest folly. Instead of getting unity with Congress-affiliated workers for fighting on wages, prices or shortages, they were driven away by the apocalyptic policies of the CPI which appeared to have nothing to offer them except a confrontation with leaders of whom they still had expectations. In such a situation it is hardly surprising that the CPI found itself isolated, with all the consequences that followed. It also meant that by 1950 Ranadive's policy came under severe attack from within the party. What was proposed, however, was not a return to the politics of the Communist International. The strongest criticism came from the Andhra leadership. Paradoxically, the people who had been responsible for the organisation that had made Telengana the most successful and positive mass movement that there has ever been in India were also the people who led it and the whole Communist Party into a position where it was incapable of responding to a resurgence of the movement in the plains of Telengana. They were seduced into the land of the national democratic revolution and guerrilla warfare.

Like Joshi before him Ranadive's exit was foreshadowed by new pronouncements from the Cominform. Ranadive had been especially influenced by the theory of 'intertwining' the stages of revolution developed by Yugoslav communists. However, after June 1948 the Yugoslavs were expelled from the Cominform so Ranadive could draw no support from that quarter. In November 1949 Liu Shao-chi spoke to an Asian trade union conference in Peking, during which he stated that China's path was the path for colonies and semi-colonies (*e.g.*, India, Pakistan etc). This was reprinted shortly afterwards in the Cominform journal, which had the effect of a approval for communist parties internationally [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. The Russians had also changed their line to show support for allying not only with rich peasants but also with the "middle bourgeoisie" [Mohan Ram 1969:33].

These articles indirectly criticized Ranadive's policy and greatly weakened his position within the CPI. In January 1950 the decisive blow was struck by an editorial in the Cominform journal:

> . . . the task of the Indian communists, drawing on the experience of the national liberation movement in China and other countries, is naturally to strengthen the alliance of the working class with all the peasantry for the introduction of urgently needed agrarian reforms . . . [For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy 27.1.50]

That effectively put the kybosh on Ranadive, who had been arguing that the Andhra Committee's alliance with rich peasants was a bourgeois deviation. The first Central Committee meeting for two years was held in May and June 1950. Totally isolated by the Cominform's change of line, Ranadive was unceremoniously booted out. Rajeswar Rao replaced him as General Secretary and four others out of a Politbureau of nine came from the Andhra region, an unmistakeable sign of who was now in charge. What also assisted the changeover was that it appeared to be going with the tide of events in Asia. Not only was there the example of China, but in many other Asian countries similar movements were in progress. In Burma, Malaya and the Philippiness there were armed agrarian movements, while in Vietnam there was a full-scale anti-imperialist war. Outside Asia there was the civil war in Greece. In such a situation it was not difficult to see Telengana part of a great international movement, sweeping to imminent success. In fact it was this which persuaded many of the waverers to keep fighting [Giri Prasad interview 1974]. It was ironic that events in another Asian country, Korea, would give the lie to this idea.

The Andhra leadership had given a large hostage to fortune in relying so heavily on international criticism of Ranadive. The crucial editorial had gone on to say:

> . . . and—on the basis of the commonstruggle for freedom and national independence of their country, against Anglo-American imperialists oppressing it and against the reactionary big bourgeoisie and the fedual princes collaborating with them—to unite with all classes, parties groups and organisations willing to defend the national independence of India. [FLP, FPD 27.1.50].

Events were to show how differently this could be interpreted to suit the purposes of Russian foreign policy.

The Andhra Line

Now freed from all restrictions of party discipline, the Andhra leadership could now implement its policy both in Telengana and in national policy. They published articles in the party journal apologizing to the Chinese Communist Party for Ranadive's implied attacks Mao Tse-tung and attacking his "Trotskyist" theory of one-stage revolution. Pursuing their analysis to its logical conclusion, they stated that 'the objective conditions for starting guerrilla resistance' existed in India and Telengana was to be India's Yenan [Mohan Ram 1969:40-41].

This was a ghastly mistake. Not only for 'technical' reasons but also for basic political ones. This situation in China had been almost totally different from that in India. When the Chinese communists were in Yenan central authority was almost non-existent in China, and had been for almost thirty years. There was the weak central government whose writ did not run over large areas of the country. Before the Japanese invasion the authority of the central government was only enjoyed in many areas by courtesy of local generals (the 'warlords'). That Yenan could exist at all goes to show the government's weakness. They were incapable of moving troops to that or to serveral other regions to enforce their authority, so it was possible for the party to consolidate its position and build up an army. In contrast, no such situation existed in India in 1950. All areas of the country were under the control of the central government which commanded a large military force. Thanks to the railway system constructed by the British, troops could be moved to any part of the country very quickly. So unlike China there were no safe areas, no Yenans, where the communists could hide.

But there existed a more crucial difference between India and China. In the 1920s there had been substantial workers and peasants movements in several regions of China, in which the communists participated and in some instances attained positions of influence. These were all destroyed by Kiang Chai-shek's offensives, the workers first of all in the Shanghai massacre in 1927. That defeat, it must be said, destroyed the best chance of establishing a workers' state in China, as the political weight of the Chinese

working class centered on Shanghai, was not inferior to that of the Russian working class in 1917.

The peasant movement survived a little longer. However, the survival of the Red Partisans, the armed wing of the movement (which eventually evolved into the People's Liberation Army), meant that a crucial change had come over the Chinese Communist Party. Instead of being peasants in arms, the absence of a mass movement meant that they were now, in fact, professional soldiers. They were external to the masses who they were supposed to lead. Mao then rationalized the situation thus:

> Only after wiping out comparatively large enemy units and occupying the cities can we arouse the masses on a large scale and build up a unified political power over a number of adjoining countries. Only thus can we arouse the attention of the people far and wide. [Mao 1930:123]

This reversed *the* basic principle of revolutionary Marzism—that the working class and *only* the working class can be the agent of its own emancipation.[15] In this formulation the military conquest precedes the self-emancipation of the working class.

This tendency was intensified by the destruction of the last popular base of the Chinese Communist Party, the Kiangsi Soviet, in 1934. Banished through the Long March to remote and desolate Yenan, the partial process which converted the army of the Chinese Communist Party from peasants in arms to a distinct, de-classed organisation, was completed.

Combine this with the Popular Front policy of the Comintern, and the bloc of four classes of New Democracy and the journey was complete. To defeat the Japanese and undermine the Kuomintang, in the absence of a clear perspective on the working class the communist party needed to assemble a base and a programme that would ensure at least the acquiesence of a large portion of Chinese society. This desire to maintain support explains the accomodations to the 'patriotic bourgeoisie' and the switchback changes in agrarian reform policies both before and after the fall of the Kuomintang, caused by temporary shifts in the tactical

[15]Because only workers have a *complete* interest in the overthrow of capital. Because 'peasants' are commodity producers, capital can make genuine concessions to them, in theory at least.

situation [see for instance Hinton 1972, Harris 1978].

The point is that in this strategy workers and peasants were passive objects during and after the conquest of power by the Chinese Communist Party. This ranged from the 'keep working' order to workers in Peking and Tientsin on the day of their liberation from the Koumintang [Lin Piao, quoted by New China News Agency, 11.1.49] to the rigid regulation of all agrarian movements by Communist Party cadres.

Now this long digression into the nature of the Chinese Revolution has not been simply to demonstrate that the Chinese Communist Party parted company with Marxism and founded a state that was ruled neither by the workers or the peasants—or even, in their own terms, the 'people'. The main point is that any experience of the Chinese Revolution was totally dissimilar to Telengana, for the following reasons.

All first-hand reports reveal that prior to the Police Action all the fighting was done by people who were peasants-in-arms, drawn from a mass movement, a mass movement of peasants and agricultural workers, which the Communist Party had been responsible for organizing and developing and in which it was deeply embedded in the sense that an overwhelming number of the cadres were worker or peasant militants [Sundarayya:1972: ch X]. There had also been a considerable number of struggles by industrial workers, even if they had been unco-ordinated, with no clear objectives and badly led. Even after the army's offensive considerable struggles took place in the plains. In Nalgonda, within six months of the offensive the Communist Party had contacts all over the area, and could send back party organizers and form party cells. Even during the forest period of the offensive contacts had still been able to distribute handbills and literature in the villages [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Not only did the Indian communists differ from the Chinese in that they had roots inside the peasantry, but there was still a mass movement in progress, which was not the case during the Yenan period.

The upshot was that the Andhra leadership emasculated their own mass movement by putting the overwhelming emphasis on guerrilla operations in forest areas. A temporary necessity was elevated into the greatest virtue. The party units were instructed to settle down to a long struggle a la China, and that the national bourgeoisie and the rich peasants were now to be considered as

allies of the (democratic) revolution [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. What this meant was that they had no perspective to deal with the spontaneous re-emergence of the movement in the Telengana plains in 1949 and 1950, which happened despite the massive repression. Some of the local organizers reported:

> In many of the villages where we conducted struggles the police came into the villages, but no one gave them any information. We actually led agricultural labour strikes in 14 villages. In 11 other villages, the agricultural labour moved on their own. We won all these strikes. But the moment our activities lessened, the landlord sections tried to go back on agreements. They got the police and the military tried to raid the villages. We could have kept the gains if we had taken effective actions against the landlords. [Sundarayya 1972:214]
>
> These strikes covered a large number of villages and a great number of people participated in them. There was a new tempo in the strikes. Women came forward along with the men to fight the landlords and seize the grain from the landlords houses and distribute it amongst themselves. They participated in demonstrations taking knives or whatever weapons they could lay their hands on.
>
> There were strikes during the groundnut plucking season in October as well as during the harvesting of the short-term crop "variga" in January-February 1950. All these strikes were led by the strike committees formed during the course of the struggle.
>
> The landlords got frightened with these waves of strikes and the morale of the strikers rose higher and higher. Its influence was felt even on washermen in the town. We could not lead their strikes as we did not have links with them. But we prevented blacklegs from Venkatadripalem from going to the town. The town washermen won their demands. [Sundarayya 1972:214-215]

What is made quite clear that despite vicious repression activity could be maintained provided that the initiative was kept up. It is also clear that the workers were capable of striking and organizing on their own initiative in the first place, without the specific prompting of communist cadres. Poor peasants, as well, fought back with or without party backing [Sundarayya 1972:215-231]. The adoption of the 'Chinese Path', the withdrawal to the forest areas, and most

of all the perspective of guerrilla squads as the principal agency of the revolution must be examined in this context.

The position in the plains was clearly exceptionally difficult but at the same it is clear that there were great opportunities. The explanation may partly be found in the reports on the land question. Time and time again the reports comment on the problems caused by the 'no struggle line' imposed by the Ranadive leadership. Here is the nub of the question. The alternative to 'no armed struggle' was not simply running off to the forest areas leaving only a skeleton organisation in the plains. The reports show that it was possible to resist and win. What was important was to keep up the pressure. Militant resistance could hardly have made the repression worse.

The real problem was political. Obsessed by the Chinese example, and lacking (through no fault of their own) any knowledge of the history of the international communist movement, the Telengana communists did not appreciate the significance of the struggles of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. The four-class alliance emphasized the role of the rich peasants. But this role was essentially passive, for they played very little active part in the movement after 1948. But they were so central to the CPI's analysis that their passivity influenced the CPI's perception of everyone else. They could hardly ignore the massive upsurge that was taking place but unlike 1944-45 they did not understand its significance. Resistance, 'armed struggle', now meant building guerrilla bases, not developing the activity and organisation of the workers and poor peasants in the plains as the core of the movement. In doing so the CPI led the movement to extinction.

11 The End of the Movement

When they came to power on the Central Committee the Andhra leadership imagined that they would be able to open up other Telenganas in various parts of India. They were sure that this could be attempted in Tripura in eastern India, and they also saw possibilities in what is now Kerala and at Warli near Bombay and in the Punjab [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. In this they were totally over-optimistic, for in no other area did this policy ever strike root.

There had indeed been considerable movements in the mid-1940s both in Travancore and in Bengal (the Tebhaga movement). Tebhaga had involved many thousands of peasants but it always had clearly limited objectives and never reached the stage of land distribution. The CPI organisation suffered from the effects of tailing the Congress and Muslim League and of supporting Partition, as well as the trauma of the event itself, and the movement was extinct by 1950. The movement in Travancore, the armed struggle at Vayalar, had been suppressed in October 1946. In neither case had the CPI organisations responded to mass movements as they did in Telengana. The point is that the new line of guerrilla warfare gave no guidance at all to people in situations where it was impossible—*i.e.*, almost everywhere. West Bengal and Kerala turned out to be the two stringest areas for the undivided CPI and then for both the CPI and CPM after 1964 but the 'Chinese Path' had nothing to offer the activists there.

In Telengana itself the change in policy meant that the squads were now sent to areas previously untouched by the agrarian movement. One prong went further west, beyond Hyderabad city to Vicarabad, 50 miles on. The squads' actions managed to scare the village officials into not collecting the taxes and food levy, and the landlords from collecting their debts and exacting *vetti* [Sundarayya 1972:237].

The totally new area of work was with the tribal people. They suffered probably the worst oppression, and still do so. The village officials were typically landlords from the plains who extorted many times the land revenue, forced labour, and manipulated the land records in their own favour. They were allied to the forest officials, who took unpaid labour and viciously enforced the forest

'rules'. These mainly concerned the cutting of firewood, which was forbidden under the rules (for 'conservation' purposes). To the tribals who conducted shifting cultivation and who depended on this wood for building and cooking this was a directed attack upon their existence. All the forest produce was auctioned by the government and contractors from the plains who paid the tribals low prices for their products in return for highly priced goods from the plains.

The officials and contractors treated the tribal people as inferior beings, as a colonial people. Government officers have always had the habit of taking tribal girls as mistresses under duress. The traditional tribal chief was often bribed by the contractors and officials into conniving with the rape of his own people. In this sort of situation, every sort of humiliation, such as the abduction of young girls following a bribe in the suitable quarters, became a common place and was approved by these 'leaders' [Sundarayya 1972:248-249].

Even though the retreat of the squads into the forest areas was supposed to result in the creation of safe areas the repression followed them. One squad was chased 120km in one day [Sundarayya 1972:242]. They were left with only two small squads in the plains and two big (25-30) people squads in the forest areas of Palvancha in Warangal district. However, in the second half of 1949 agricultural labourers in this region went on a wave of strikes for increased wages. 20,000 workers participated and they won their demands. The CPI recruited 400 members, 90% of them agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Six womens groups were also formed from this number [Sundarayya 1972:243].

The arrival of the squads was considerable surprise to the tribals and as was said earlier, it took four to six months to gain their confidence. One thing which helped this was the effect on the oppressors: such was the reputation of the CPI that many of them fled at once. Those who remained were prepared to pay the wages that the squads demanded. Land and cattle were redistributed and village committees and squad formed—up to a thousand tribal youth were involved in these. Two hundred were recruited into the party —including twenty women. These village committees were often, in fact, the old tribal councils renamed and now freed from the domination of the old 'leaders' and officials. They hardly ever functioned like the committees in the plains areas [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

The directing role was now more than ever taken by the squads. From the Warangal forests the movement extended up the forest areas by the Krishna river to the Gond people of Adilabad district in the north [Sundarayya 1972:249-250].

The reaction of the government to these people moving to take control of their own lives was typically brutal. There was a 'pacification campaign'—villages were razed to the ground and then the inhabitants removed to concentration camps fifty miles away in the plains. This served several purposes: it isolated them from the squads, it enabled the fleeing officials and contractors to identify militants at their leisure, and it was a severe blow to the morale of the tribal people, whose culture was bound up in their relationship with their land from which they had been brutally parted. On top of all this was the almost routine murders, rapings and tortures [Sundarayya 1972:251-252, D.V. Rao interview 1974]. 'Traditional' leaders, now well in with the Congress, tried to persuade people to move to the camps voluntarily and carried on propaganda against the communists, generally with little success. Sometimes the entire village fled into the forest to escape removal. This meant that they were continually moving around, living off the land. In Palvancha especially, the guerrillas were severely weakened by the poor living and were an easy prey for disease. In addition they had been out of contact with the Provincial Committee for no less than two years. In such circumstances the motivation for continuing began to crumble. This was exemplified when cadres were betrayed to the army by people from the first village in the area to have formed a committee [Giri Prasad interview 1974].

However, while the squads were being bounded around the forests yet more massive struggles led by agricultural labourers occurred in the adjacent plains areas. In the Pindiprolu and Illendu areas in 1949 there were agricultural labourer strikes in 90 villages for wage increases. In 20 villages women agricultural labourers went on strike independently and defied threats from the landlords so successfully that the strikes spread to another 16 villages [Sundarayya 1972:259].

When the squads moved to other districts (Karimnagar, Medak, and Nizamabad), actions like the attack on the Sircilla police station of June 10 1950 ignited actions against the landlords by the poor over a wide area. But what happened at the same time was that traders and rich peasants were being courted by the squads, who:

> . . . carried on explanatory campaigns and when they [the merchants and rich peasants-BP] saw that the squads were only taking action against the most hated oppressors and their agents, and that the interests of other sections were being protected, their fears were allayed and they returned. [Sundarayya 1972:289]

This surely is the crux of the Telengana struggle. Time and time again we have seen how it was the rural poor, labourers and peasants in the plains areas, who rose up both before and after the Police Action and engaged in heroic and often successful struggles, for land before September 1948 and mainly for wages afterwards. But the CPI abandoned them not only territorially but also politically. And not only the rural workers. Despite the repression and the capture of the union bureaucracies by Congress 'Socialists' (sic), the urban workers were fighting back. In November 1949 there had been a wide spread strike of government and industrial workers in Warangal. There was an attempt at a state-wide general strike in February 1950 but this, as most strikes during this period, was hamstrung by Socialist Party 'trade union leaders', most of whom had installed themselves after the Police Action and made considerable use of the police in weeding out any communists and their sympathisers in the unions [Crossroads 10.2.50].

This was still the period of the Ranadive insurrectionary line and in fact a series of strikes launched in 1949 under this policy had met with heavy repression [Sundarayya 1972 300-310]. Given the particular situation in Hyderabad it would probably be true to say that they would have met the same problems even if Ranadive had never existed but without a perspective which could have linked their movements with what was going on in the countryside the result would probably have been the same: they fought alone and suffered a severe thrashing to no purpose.

To conclude, at a time when it is clear that it was possible to build the party on a mass basis throughout Telengana, despite the repression, by relating to the mass struggles, and at the same time building workers' organisations which could have been the firm bases for continuing struggle, the most militant elements of the CPI were doing no such thing. They were expending their energies in creating a guerrilla army in the forests and on maintaining a political front with rich peasants and the bourgeoisie. This despite the absence of *any* signs from *any* section of the bourgeoisie of

interest in such an alliance, and the real situation in Telengana where most of the small landlords had moved over to the Congress and the rich peasants as a group were either passive or hostile. The disastrous results of these politics cannot be over-emphasized. Not only did they mean that the CPI missed its chance to build the revolutionary socialist party in Telengana, but it also opened up the may for the right wing in the party to attack the new national leadership and the movement itself.

The Coup by the Right

The new policy had done nothing to re-establish the shattered structure of the CPI. No new areas of armed struggle were set up because the requisite conditions did not exist. For most of the surviving cadres the new leadership had precious little to offer them. In urban and rural areas alike 'China's path' was irrelevant. Moreover the new line had been sprung on them out of thin air (like most changes of policy in the CPI). The previous change of leadership had at least been approved by a Party Congress. This time a complete reversal of the party's politics and the replacement of more than half the national leadership had taken place at a meeting of the Central Committee. Because of the bureaucratic internal regime of the CPI there would not have been any debate below provincial committee level even had the prevailing external situation made that possible. With so many of the cadre confused, uninvolved and denied proper direction the ideal conditions had been created for the right wing of the CPI to stage a coup.

By the end of 1950 there had developed an organized attempt to oust the Central Committee from control of the party. This was led by S.A. Dange, the Bombay party boss, and Ajoy Ghosh from Bengal [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. Using his position gained as party leader in Bombay for almost thirty years, Dange took over the party headquarters, which had been in Bombay. This 'parallel' centre called itself 'Party Headquarters Unit' and published a bulletin as part of the campaign against the leadership. Their main charge was that the Andhra leadership had purposely over-estimated the strength of the mass movement in Telengana, and compounded this charge with accussations that their policy, like Ranadive's was based on a Titoite deviation[16] [Mohan Ram 1969:44].

[16]Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform in 1948 after Tito refused to sign a disadvantageous trade agreement with the Russians. 'Titoite' swiftly

The following exchange gives a good example of how open Dange's challenge to the Central Committee had become. On 11th July 1950, that is only *one* month after they had been elected Dange held a press conference in Bombay, under the slogan 'Mobilise for a Democratic Front.' This was to be against imperialism, landlords and 'big syndicates'. It was also against the policy of the newly elected Central Committee. Dange said:

> The impression given by the Government and the Press has been that the Communists are doing nothing but planning 'armed insurrections' anywhere and everywhere, at all times, and on every street corner. Unfortunately that impression was strengthened to some extent by the ill-planned behaviour of some section of the leadership of the Communist Party.
> I wish to convey that that impression is wrong, and I wish to state most emphatically that we do not hold the view that in the present conditions a successful armed revolution is the only step to overthrow the Nehru Government and establish a People's Democratic State in India. That definately is not on the agenda of the Party today and appropriate changes are being made in the leadership of the Party. [Crossroads 28.7.50]

That was a complete distortion of what had just been decided at the June meeting of the Central Committee, a body whose authority Dange rigorously defended whenever he was in the majority, Dange then went on to nail his colours to the mast:

> The immediate changes which the Party wishes to do really depend on whether the present government was going to allow us all the democratic liberties required to function as a political party, i.e., liberties required in every democratic country. The most important problems to be solved were food, unemployment, work and wage for all the toiling classes. The Party did really wish to utilize all democratic methods including the most legal method. It included the utilisation of the legislatures also. [Crossroads 28.7.50]

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became spritual curse-word calculated to turn the unfortunate recipient into a kind of political leper.

Dange was in fact opening negotiations with the government by means of an open letter. In return for legality they would call off any struggle for power. It was an open challenge to the new Central Committee. They had to reply but when they did so it was rather weak:

> The Polit Bureau wants to make it clear that Comrade Dange's statement was made on his own responsibility without consulting the Polit Bureau or the Central Committee, [It is] . . . at variance with the existing Party line as enunciated in the latter of the new Central Committee . . . [Crossroads 11.8.50]

And that, apart from a homily on the need for party members not to criticise the party in public, was that. Dange, by apparently taking up the issues which were concerning the workers (even if only to use them for electoral purposes) had pulled the rug from underneath their feet. They took no disciplinary measures at all against Dange, even though he had misrepresented the party in public, attacked the Central Committee and offered to make peace with the government. For all this he received the mildest verbal rap over the knuckles. It was an amazing display of weakness by a new Central Committee, elected only one month previously. It revealed how precarious their position really was and gave the opposition group to green light to press forward.

What greatly assisted their intentions, which were to get back to the class-collaboration of P.C. Joshi, was that they had a large block of supporters inside Telengana. The people who had been really only fighting for accession and had not really taken up the agrarian campaign, such as Ravi Narayan Reddy and B. Yella Reddi, now took up with Dange. They were by now in jail but as thing turned out this left them well-placed to undermine the leadership and the movement.

By 1950 there were many thousands of prisoners, all kept in foul and disgusting conditions, subjected to brutality, torture, and farcical 'justice' Typically a prisoner would be tried for a crime which had occurred several months prior to arrest, with the proceedings in English when almost none of the prisoners were literate in it, and was sentenced to death if the charge was murd°r [*e.g.*, case of Janardhan Reddy; Labour Monthly: July 1950]. For people suffering in conditions like this, with apparently no point to it all, it was

not too difficult to persuade them that the situation had changed and that the struggle should be called off, especially when it was couched in the usual CPI rhetoric with which they were familiar: The government had, after all, been negotiating with their leaders who were in jail. In return for the ending of the armed struggle they had been promised civil liberties, an amnesty for guerrillas, an end to punitive actions and the opportunity to participate in the general elections due at the beginning of 1952 [B. Yella Reddy interview 1974].

This was of course the kind of deal that the opposition group had been hoping for. However, they were still not the official leadership and the people who were actually doing the fighting in Telengana were loyal to the Central Committee. A split party would not serve their purpose at all, since the government would not do a deal if the Telengana movement were not called off. It was therefore necessary to remove the Andhra leadership. This was made possible by events outside India.

In June 1950 war had broken out in Korea between the pro-American regime of Syngman Rhee and the communist government in the north. This rapidly developed into a confrontation between the 'Free World' and the Eastern bloc, conveniently (for them) fought only on the soil of Korea. It became the central concern of Russian foreign policy, and their judgments on all regimes was now determined by their attitude to the war. The CPI had already been promoting the 'Peace Movement', a general front used by communist parties all over the world in support of the 'Stockholm Appeal' of the World Peace Council, an international Popular Front aimed against atomic weapons (which Russia did not yet possess) and German re-armament. When the Indian government began to adopt a stance critical of the USA this gave the opposition group the opportunity to push home their advantage, using the weapon that had toppled the two previous leaderships.

This initially took the form of an interview with R. Palme Dutt, the British Communist Party's specialist on India and dozen of many people in the leadership of the CPI. This was published in Crossroads in January 1951 and in it he criticized the 'mechanical' application of the Andhra experience to the rest of India and then went on to say that the 'National Democratic Front' could be built from the basis of the Peace Movement. He also began that process of identifying some sort of 'differentiation' within the bourgeoisie—

Patel representing big business and imperialism while Nehru represented national monopolies who did not always support imperialism, and whose differences should therefore be exploited [Mohan Ram 1969:47-48].

There then occurred one of the most bizarre episodes in the history of the CPI. This was the secret mission to Moscow, which was long rumoured about but never openly admitted until 1968. Pressured from without as well as by the opposition group within the party, the Central Committee majority were compelled to agree to a delegation travelling to Moscow to consult with the Russian Communist Party as to what their line should be. To this day no-one agrees on what actually happened when they got to Moscow. This was partly because the delegation only made a verbal report but also because the advice was phrased in such oblique terms that it was apparently capable of several different interpretations. As a result, a large number of exaggerated and sometimes hilarious accounts of what occurred circulated on the India left. The precise truth will probably not be known until the opening of the Kremlin archives.

What is certain is that the CPI delegation consisted of Rajeswar Rao and M. Basavapunnish (from the Central Committee Majority) and Ghosh and Dange (from the opposition). The delegation from the Russian party consisted of Molotov, Malenkov, Suslov and Stalin. One version has it that the Russians' advice was that the correlation of class forces was not suitable for armed struggle for People's Democracy and so the struggle should not have been continued after the fall of the Nizam. It should now be withdrawn, and they should offer to start negotiations with the government, while trying to defend the gains by 'mobilising democratic support' [Sundarayya 1972:398]. Although D.V. Rao criticizes Sundarayya for misrepresenting what Stalin said [D. V. Rao 1974;34], his conclusion that any party was free to accept or reject Russian 'advice' is rather disingenuous. The Yugoslavs rejected such 'advice' and were anathematised as a result. The day when communist parties would risk disagreeing with Russians without suffering costracism was still a long time off. Given the, to say the least, uncritical, attitude of all sections of the CPI towards Stalin and the Russians it is inconceirvable that they would not have acted on what they were told in Moscow.

So it must be assumed that the Central Committee which met in May 1951 acted in broad consonance with the advice which they

had been given in Moscow. Under intense pressure, Rajeshwar Rao and the Polit Bureau of June 1950 resigned, and Ajoy Ghosh became General Secretary. The Party Headquarters ground continued to denounce the Telengana movement as a terrorist rampage, and Ravi Narayan Reddy, just released from jail, formed a group (the 'Preparatory Committee') which functioned as an open, legal front and started preparing for the elections (Sundarayya 1972:416-420]. To stop the party breaking up the new Polit Bureau set up a committee to negotiate with the government for an end to the armed struggle, as people who came out against continuation were immediately released from jail. There was a danger of the defacto split in the party being institutionalized if the fighting was not stopped. The government realized this very well and put on the pressure by refusing to negotiate with the CPI team when they (Mozaffar Ahmed, A.K. Gopalan and Jyoit Basu) got to Hyderabad. The team had three terms: stopping all evictions until after the general elections, withdrawal of the military from Telengana, and the release of the communist prisoners [Crossroads 27.7.51]. The government knew very well that the CPI had conceded its negotiating position in advance and was so desperate for legality and the opportunity to participate in the elections that it would be forced to abandon the Telengana movement even if it got no guarantees at all.

This is indeed how it turned out. After three months of fruitless negotiations the Central Committee announced that to prove that it was engaged in 'partisan resistance', which was responsible for the absence of a favourable atmosphere for free and fair elections, it and the Andhra Committee were advising the guerrillas to stop fighting [Crossroads 26.10.51]. In only remained to put this into effect.

Ajoy Ghosh wrote a long article in the Cominform journal catelo-guing what had gone wrong, again accusing the previous leadership of skipping over the necessary stages of revolution, and do not recognizing that the masses were not ready for socialism; the problems were caused by:

> . . . failure of the Party leadership to evolve a correct revolutionary line, the prevalence of a left-sectarian outlook, policies, and methods—the attempt to skip over the democratic stage of the revolution and refusal to see the semi-colinial nature of our country which demanded the unification of all anti-imperialist classes and forces for carrying out anti-feudal and national-liberation tasks . . . [FLP, FPD 19.10.51].

It was easy enough to issue calls in party press and it was not too difficult for Ravi Narayan Reddy and the others in the right group to take control of the party members and organisations in the Telengana plains, using the prestige of the party name. This they did via their electoral front, the people's Democratic Front, which set up in March 1951 and included a number of well-known non-Communist intellectuals as well as CPI members [Crossroads 23.3.51] The problem was how to get at the guerrillas.

The Andhra leadership was very demoralized by the split in the party and their subsequent exclusion by the right wing, but possibly as many as 90% of the local leadership (area and zonal committee members) had no confidence in Ajoy Ghosh and Dange and did not wish to give up [D.V. Rao interview 1974]. However, according to Sundarayya, the Palvancha and Karimnagar-Adilabad area committees were the ones in favour of a withdrawal of the guerrilla struggle [Sundarayya 1972:422]. Even those who were in favour of continuation, and who called the others 'Mensheviks', were not willing to split the party. Ajoy Ghosh threatened to disown anyone who did not obey, but the reaction to this was so hostile that eventually it was necessary to send Rajeswar Rao to the operational areas to get them to stop. Many of the groups first heard of the decision over All India Radio and although it was made in October it was not until December that the fighting organisations were finally disbanded. Many people had to remain underground as they still had charges out against them [D.V. Rao interview 1974].

Although the calling-off of the armed struggle has often been labelled a 'sell-out', both D.V. Rao and Sundarayya agree that by 1951 the actions had become more concentrated on the level of individuals and more inclined towards terrorism than a mass movement [D.V. Rao interview 1974, Sundarayya 1972:422]. It is true that the new leadership was quite prepared to sacrifice the Telengana fighters for the sake of participating in the elections and that they were beginning to worm themselves around any willing bourgeois. The root of the debacle, however, lies not in any single act of betrayal, but in the politics of the CPI which caused the CPI cadres to abandon the struggle of the workers and peasants in favour of a 'national democratic' day-dream. It is to this that we shall have to return after discussing the after-math of the movement itself.

PART FOUR

Dreams and Nightmares

12 Aftermath—The Liquidation of the Movement

The right group in the CPI got the electoral triumph that they desired. In the elections of February 1952 the Congress was routed in Telengana. Congress contested all 13 Lok Sabha seats in Telengana, got 40% of the votes and won 5 seats. The People's Democratic Front (PDF), the right-CPI electoral organisation, polled 28% of the total vote and won six seats. In the elections to the state assembly the PDF won all fourteen seats in Nalgonda district, and 45 out of 175 in the whole State Assembly. In the elections to the Lok Sabha seat for Nalgonda, Ravi Narayan Reddy crushed his Congress opponent, polling 307, 162 votes against 86,132. This gave him the largest majority of any MP, bigger even than that of Nehru, as the CPI never fail to remind us [Ravi Narayan Reddy 1973:74].

In the Andhra region of Madras state the CPI gained 26% of the votes and 41 out of 140 Assembly seats. The Congress fared badly in the Lok Sabha elections, winning only six out of 28 seates. Although these results were certainly impressive they did not give the CPI any more than the status of the official opposition. A Congress administration was formed in Hyderabad with B. Ramkrishna Rao as Chief Minister. Meanwhile the disengagement from the armed struggle was giving the CPI a lot of problems which were to have serious consequences for the future. After the elections a Telengana Committee was formed, and the two organisations (legal and underground) were merged, although a number of people who were underground were opposed to a joint committee with people who they considered to have betrayed them by compaigning again the armed struggle while they were still, fighting in the forests. The new legal organisation was in fact mainly dominated by people who had opposed the armed struggle, and showed how they intended to operate by instructing all party members to return to their home districts. Since this mainly applied to people from Nalgonda who had been involved in the extension of the armed struggle, it meant that many areas were deprived of their most militant and experienced members. It has been argued that this effectively liquidated the party in many areas and fatally weakened the party in the whole of Telengana, which explains the later collapse of electoral strength

[D.V. Rao interview 1974].

This does go part of the way to explaining the almost total collapse in communist electoral strength in Telengana since 1952 (see below), but the further degeneration of the CPI into tail-ending the Congress determined what happened in general. The foreign policy of the Nehru government appeared to diverge further and further from Western interests during the 1950s. Non-alignment and the establishment of cordial relations with Russia and China meant that the CPI was subject to ever-increasing pressure to toe the international line of being integratiating towards Nehru. At the party congresses of Madurai (1953) and Palghat (1956) ever-more sympathetic resolutions were passed concerning the Indian state. This process culminated in the Amritsar Congress of 1958. Here the first time the party formally adopted the line of unity with the 'progressive' sections of the bourgeoisie and of Congress. In consequence the party formally renounced revolutionary socialism in favour of 'national democracy' for the foreseeable future. The new party constitution stated the party's aims were:

> . . . full democracy and socialism by peaceful means . . . the widest possible extension of individual liberty, freedom of speech, press, and association, including the right of political association. [CPI Constitution 1958: Preamble]

The party formally abandoned revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and accepted the bourgeois state. It was not only because of outside pressure. The Congress government, following the advice of Indian capitalists given in the Bombay Plan of 1944, was building a large state sector in the economy. Given their identification of Russian state capitalism with socialism, the CPI took the public sector into their bosom as their own. This identification later led a number of leading CPI members[17] to leave the party for the Congress to participate in the building of the public sector.

As a necessary consequence of the political decision the organisational structure of the party was fundamentally altered. The party decided to change from a 'cadre' party to a 'mass' party—which meant that the basic unit of party organisation became geographical—*i.e.*, *electoral*, rather than industrial. The whole party

[17]Notably Mohan Kumaramangalam, who became Minister of Steel and Mines in Indira Gandhi's cabinet.

was turned away from the terrain of the working class to that of the bourgeoisie.

Not that this capitualation ever did the CPI any good. Even as the party was bowing and scraping before the progressive national bourgeoisie at Amritsar, those very same people were conspiring to undermine the elected CPI state Government in Kerala, which in 1957 had become the first parliamentary communist administration anywhere in the world. By a combination of unscrupulous agitation by rich peasant and religious groups inside the state and by administrative manipulation from the centre the government was 'toppled' early in 1959. In fact the Indian bourgeoisie has hardly ever needed the CPI in the role in which the party cast itself—the arbiter of Indian bourgeois democracy—except in 1969-71 during the first Congress split.[18] But before that the change in direction had already cost the party dear, not least in Telengana.

The Disintegration of the CPI's Base

The CPI reverted to a programme of united linguistic states, away from the emphasis on agrarian change. The lanugage question was a considerable issue in the 1950s, as it involved the dissolution of the old British provinces, to the detriment of certain regional bourgeois groups and to the advantage of those who got their separate states as a result. The CPI was prominent in several of the agitations for linguistic states, notably the one for the creation of Gujrat out of Bombay. The problem was that they participated on the terms of the bourgeoisie. By insisting that they were just putting forward 'democratic' demands all working-class content was removed from the campaign, which meant that the CPI made precious few gains from it. This was graphically demonstrated in the campaign for a united Andhra state.

This had been a CPI policy, both in Hyderabad and the Andhra region, right from the 1940s. The CPI had gained a quarter of the votes in the Andhra region in 1952, on the basis of a militant peasant movement. In 1955 the Andhra districts of Madras state

[18]The Congress led by Indira Gandhi was reduced to a minority when 68 MPs split, and was dependent on CPI and CPM support (as well as some regional parties). This was the Indira 'radical' phase, of bank nationalisation and abolition of the princes' privy purses, which so effectively hoodwinked both the parties. After the 1971 victory Congress ruthlessly tampled on their now useless allies.

were made into a seperate state, in preparation for a united Andhra state, which had to await the final partition of Hyderabad when the other linguistic states of Maharashtra and Mysore (now Karnataka) were set up. The CPI decided to go for a decisive electoral victory on the Vishalndhra programme. The result was that although their vote increased from 26% to 31%, they only won 15 seats out of 196, as against 41 out of 140 in 1952. This certainly suggests gerrymandering but again reveals the danger of relying on the parliamentary approach. When the united Andhra Pradesh was formed in 1957, elections in Telengana brought the CPI strength to 87 seats out of 301 (the Congress had 203). However in the Lok Sabha elections the Congress overturned the 1952 results and won 39 out of the 43 Andhra Pradesh seats.

If this was a setback, over the next twenty years the electoral position disintegrated, as follows:

		Assembly	*Lok Sabha*	*% vote*	
1962		51	8	19.5	
1967	CPI	10	1	7.5	
	CPM	9	—	7.7	
1971	CPI		1	6.0	
	CPM		1	2.8	
1972	CPI	7		6.1	
	CPM	1		3.1	
1977	CPI		—		very small number of candidates due to electoral pacts
	CPM		—		
1978	CPI	8			
	CPM	6			
1980	CPI/CPM		—		

What had been the second largest party in Andhra Pradesh, which had led a revolutionary agrarian movement in Telengana and a militant peasant movement in coastal Andhra, which had tied down an army of 50,000, has been reduced to almost total insignifigance.

Not that this was inevitable. There was no dearth of issues around which they could have organized. The most important was *banchari*,

or communal lands, a geat areas of which was lying vacant. Between 1954-60 a campaign around this was wages in Warangal and also in the Nalgonda and Suryapet taluqas of Nalgonda district. In 1961 the Warangal district committee organized a march to Hyderabad on the issue, and much to the surprise of the State Committee 1,000 people marched. This encourged them to organize a Telengana-wide march three months later, which attracted 10,000 people. However, the government banned the marchers from entering Hyderabad, and the State Committee instructed the marchers to disperse once they came up against the police cordon [Prasad interview 1979]. This capitulation marked the end of the Telengana movement.

Now—except in certain very localised pockets neither the CPI nor the CPM is of any real signifigance. When a bitter regional conflict arose between the petit-bourgeois of Telengana and coastal Andhra in 1972-73 (over the reservation of jobs in the state service), the CPI and the CPM were incapable of doing anything to halt it. They were both reduced to issuing pious statements as people were slaughtered in regional riots. During the mass upsurge the late 1960s they had been marginalized as the leadership of radical agrarian movements were taken up Maoist (Marxist-Leninist) groups. Whose members included some of the leading members of the Telengana movement. What was responsible for this debacle was not the fact of the CPI/CPM split but the way in which both these parties followed the same politics and allowed Andhra Pradesh to become dominated by the factional politics of the new bourgeoisie.

The Triumph of the Bourgeoisie

The first steps in this process had been the land reform legislated by the new regime in Hyderabad—the Hyderabad Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act of 1950. All tenants who held land for six years were declared 'protected' tenants, and were given the right to purchase the land on easy terms. Other tenants were given tenure for ten years. Over 6,00,000 tenants were eventually declared 'protected,' cultivating over one-quarter of the cultivated area of the state [Khusro 1958:20-21]. The later Amendment Acts of 1954 introduced the concept of family holdings as a yardstick for reforms, as an area of land that would support a family of five people.

Jagirs had been dissolved after the Jagir Abolition Regulation of

1949. All *jagir* lands were taken over by the state and an immediate remission of 12½% land revenue was given for the season of 1949-50. Although this did not by itself drastically alter the pattern of land ownership it did remove the 'legal exactions' of money, gifts, un-paid labour and the like—of the *jagirdars* at least. It also removed people who stood between any peasants and ownership rights [Khusro 1958:15-16]. The operation of reform was interesting. A survey conducted in 1954-55 came up with the following results from ex-*jagir* areas:

Of protected tenants in 1951

	Remaining	*Purchased*	*Voluntarily surrendered*	*Legally evicted*	*Illegally evicted*
Telengana	55·5	17·1	10·6	3·5	13·9
Marathwada	23·8	2·1	22·2	0·5	51·8
Karanataka	31·3	5·8	53·0	1·2	9·1

[Khusro 1958:40]

This would very clearly suggest that evasions of land reforms were very much smaller in Telengana than the rest of the state and the compiler of the report did indeed draw the conclusion that this was caused by the greater political consciousness in Telengana [Khusro 1958:43]. In other words the Telengana movement created a feeling of strength and a will to fight that was not seen in other areas. It was this that the CPI subordinated to electoral considerations.

The land reforms can be looked at in another may. The government census of land holdings in 1955 came up with this result for Nalgonda:

	Owner-cultivation	*By labour*	*Tenancy*
Acres	10,246,887	3,529,892	2,778,966

[Land Census 1956:82-83]

Now granted that many of the owners would be either very small cultivators, or on the other hand the so-called 'rich peasants' who employ a considerable amount of labour but get into that category because they put in some labour themselves. However, even taking all this into account it must still suggest that Telengana was passing into the domination of rich farmers rather *deshmukhs*, whose land was cultivated either by labour or tenants.

This was in sharp contrast to the position found by earlier investigators (see Ch. II).

The particular form which the Andhra Pradesh land reform took reveals its purprose quite clearly. As was mentioned above, the basis of the land reform was the 'family holding,' determined in terms of income for a family of five—Rs 800 in 1954 [Khusro 1958:21] and Rs 5,200 in 1961 [Gray 1970:133]. Now this is a definition which is based on *production*, not on rent-receiving, owned area, or consumption levels:

> . . . in the mid-1950s many state laws specified that any piece of land yielding Rs 1,200 of net income, after deducting the cost of cultivation, will be deemed to be a family holding. Three times the family holding, *i.e.*, a piece of land yielding Rs 3,600 (later changed in Andhra Pradesh to $4\frac{1}{2}$ times family holding =Rs 5,400) of net income will be deemed to be the ceiling limit. This measure of Rs 3,600 was only used at mid-1950s prices as a yardstick to equate different types of land. Once different types of land were equated and it was settled that in a particular region 15 acres of wet land was equivalent to 60 acres of good dry land, land equivalence was established and the income yardstick of Rs 3,600 was thrown out. Thereafter, ceiling was in terms of land and land alone. . .*It was never the intention that these lands should continue to yield a real income of Rs 36,000 only*. [Emphasis added—BP] It was clearly seen that owing to technical change and a much larger use of new outputs, which was in the offing, the same land would yield a real income twice or thrice times or four times greater than Rs 3,600. In fact this has come true. Yields have increased with newer strategies of agricultural development, and where this has happened, the same 15 or 60 acres of wet and dry land are clearly yielding Rs 15,000 of real net income per annum. [Khusro 1973:xv-xvi]

So clearly the intention of the land reform was to promote a *productive* class, and one producing a large surplus over their own subsistence needs. This was to be achieved by 'a much larger use of new outputs' . . . *i.e.*, by the application of larger and larger quantities of *capital.* This does not necessarily envisage the elimination of 'peasant,' who in the main are now family farms engaged in commodity production ('Simple' commodity producers). The commoditisation process mentioned before has done its work by now, and there are now precious few true 'peasants' left—that is people able to move in and out of commodity production at will.[19] The Telengana 'peasants' are now so immersed in the market that any disengagement is unimaginable.[20] This 'non-capitalist' sector remains considerable—but then there is a large 'peasant' sector inside the E.E.C. but I have never heard it suggested that this detracts from the capitalist nature of the European economy.

The CPM, for instance, misses this out in its analysis—the landlord category is defined by an absence of physical, labour, and the rich peasant category by an excess of wage labour over family labour—[Sundarayya 1977:10]. What this overlooks is that both attempt to increase the rate of exploitation by the application of increasing amounts of pump-sets (in this case, pump-sets, tractors, fertilisers, etc). Both attempt to maximize the rate of return on their capital, and therefore the division is actually spurious and idealist. On the other hand, the 'middle peasant,' as defined by

[19]For a perceptive and useful insight on the distinction between 'peasants' and 'simple commodity production', see Friedmann [1980]. The literature and debate on simple commodity production, and its form and role within capitalist and precapitalist society, is rapidly expanding and will have increased by the time that this work is read. A great deal is taking place within the pages of the Journal of Peasant Studies, and I have drawn greatly upon it for ways to fight out of the 'mode of production' cul-de-sac. The following contribution are of particular value : Bernstein [1977 & 1979], Ennew, Hirst and Tribe [1977], Friedmann [1978 & 1980], Mann and Dickinson [1978], Mouzelis [1976], and Vergopoulos [1978] The incipient problem is that by concentrating on agriculture they may miss the general application that simple commodity production has in the capitalist mode of production.

[20]Dowry is now almost universally paid in commodities—at the lowest level watches, bicycles or synthetic clothes, which means an unbrakable and essential relationship to the market, even leaving aside all other consumption requirements.

Sundarayya, as having an excess of family over wage labour, is in fact usually engaged in the afore-mentioned simple commodity production—that is, they do not increase production by the application of capital (or 'dead labour'), but by increasing their own labour time to attain the greatest possible income. Unlike the capitalist farmers, the objective of whose production is the accumulation of further capital, the simple commodity producers objective is the maximisation of their consumption levels. This most of 'middle-peasants' and also 'poor peasants' properly belong together as simple commodity producers. The 'poor peasants' would in this context be the families whose total income from simple commodity production is less than that necessary for subsistence and who therefore have to sell some of their labour power.

It is not that the 'rich peasant' is better off than the 'middle' or 'poor peasant,' it is that they are now different kinds of producers. Before they were irreverseably immersed in market relations these terms had some relevance, and in the period of the movement the process was very much less developed, with rich peasants having far less access to capital than than they do now. It was the domination of the *deshmukhs* that stood in their way, as the *deshmukhs* were the social base of the state in the rural areas. The new Congress regime gave them the access to capital which they desired, and thus gained their support.

So the area of land held is not what *determines* the class of the landholder, but their relationship to capital and the object of their production. However, having said that, area is a fairly reasonable *indicator* to the balance of classes, as at a given technical level capitalist production is unlikely to take place below a certain area of land.

This does not mean that large landowners, many of whom survived into the new regime, abandoned other forms of exploitation, such as bonded labour and forced exactions. Wherever possible they used these to reinforce their capitalist production. Consequently, for the land reforms the ceiling was not viewed as a maximum, but as a mean to be aimed for. That is the only point in setting a ceiling so far above the level necessary to provide subsistence for the basic family. As Khusro said of the ceilings:

> From society's point of view this should correspond to the size with the highest average output and from the individual farmer's

viewpoint the size with the lowest average long-term cost or the highest long-run profit per unit of output. [Khusro 1973:16].

Basing your land reform policy on the criteria of capitalist economics it is quite clear who was intended to benefits, as shown by the landholding statistics for Telengana:

Size distribution % II

Acres	*Ownership holdings*	*Owned area*
0-2.5	24·2	1·8
2.5-5	16·4	3·9
5-10	20·6	9·6
10-30	27·2	30·0
30-60	7·6	22·2
60+	4·0	34·5

[Khusro 1973:156-157]

In other words, the people intended to benefit from the land reform and agricultural policy were that 11.6% of owners who owned 56·7% of the land, with the 27·2% owning 30% to receive a smaller share of the rewards. As the body in charge of implementing the land reforms put it:

> Increased production is absolutely essential for putting national economy on a firm basis. Production suffers because of very large holdings held by absentee landlords who are solely interested in rents and also because of small and uneconomic holdings which stand in the way of advance in agricultural production. [Land Reform Series 9, 1954:17-18]

As the ceilings were based on the idea of individual ownership, it was of course quite possible for a large landowner to transfer land into the name of relatives and so keep the holding intact.

What that in turn meant was that political power lay in the hands of those institutions which channelled the flow of productive (or 'developmental') resources from the central government to the producers. These were mainly in the local government (*Panchayati*

Raj) bodies and the co-operatives [Nhaskara Rao 1968:162]. Personal observation bears this out—what was clearly the essential attribute for prosperity in 1974, whatever kind of producer you were, was possession of a pump-set. A local study found out that 30 out of 44 members of one local government body owned over half the ceiling, while 61 out of 106 Telengana Assembly members owned over half the ceiling [Gray 1970:135-135].

Politics in Andhra Pradesh, certainly since 1962, have been predominately a question of factionalism inside this class. Even after the Emergency state politics is still dominated by these people, grouped variously in the Congress-I, Congress, and Janata. It happened because by accepting the rule of the bourgeoies the CPI and the CPM justified what was going on and so in reality had nothing to offer the workers, rural or urban. In a real sense they encouraged it, by including 'rich peasants' in the 'national democratic' (CPI) or 'people's democratic' (CPM) fronts. The Marxist-Leninist groups, still trapped in Popular Front politics, do essentially the same. What makes them different is their hostility to the state, which means they have supported the mass movements which have happened since 1967. The problem is that their politics do not equip them to deal with the fact that these movements are essentially 'poor peasant' or working class, so do not fit in with their preconceived ideas.

Back to the Drawing Board

When the Girijans (tribal people) of Srikakulam district in coastal Andhra rose up in 1970-71, the only political leadership they got was from Marxist-Leninist ex-students. At the present time a movement is starting in Karimnagar district, an area that was not really touched by the agrarian movement. Organisations known as Ryotu Coolie Sanghams are coming into conflict with large landowners (known a *doras*, many of whom are ex-*deshmukhs*) and therefore with the state:

> The Ryotu Coolie Sanghams do not seem to have a formal structure, are more in the nature of a movement. Even farmers holding more than 40 or 50 acres support the sanghams. Concerning the membership of the sangham in a village, a peasant said, 'Who is not, except the dora? When asked why the sanghams were formed, a peasant activist owning 20 acres said 'The

dora used to collect fines, bribes, we were abused and beaten. Our forefathers and fathers put up with it. We are still bonded labourers. How can we continue to be so? That's why we have organised ourselves as a Sangham.'

The movement developed over the following issues:

—return of bribes taken by landlords during the Emergency on the threat of getting the peasants arrested.

—increase in wages.

—cultivation of public land held illegally by the landlords. [Fronties 3.2.79].

In fact this movement would appear to be intensifying at the time of writing. The point is that there could have been mass organisations of the rural poor in existence ever since 1951.

Thanks to their demobilisation of the mass movement in the name of 'national democracy' the CPI created a situation where the agrarian movement in Telengana is politically no more advanced than it was thirty-five years ago and in terms of organisation is much further backward.

13 The Consequences

At this stage it might be appropriate to summarize the main points made so far:

(1) A social crisis was created in Telengana after the wide-spread cultivation of groundnut was introduced in the 1920s. This initiated a process of 'commoditisation' in the rural economy—an irreversible immersion in the world market. This exacerbated to economic crises of the Depression and World War II which the *deshmukhs* utilized to seize land which only now could produce an economic income.

(2) This was combined with the attempt of the Nizam's regime to establish an independent autocratic state, which eventually was compelled to rely on the neo-fascist Ittehad. Since the *deshmukhs* were the main social base of the regime in the countryside, the two issues were inevitably entangled.

3) This led to opposition to the regime which gave the appearance of a multi-class Popular Front alliance. In reality, however, the cultivators with enough land to reproduce a consistent surplus opposed the *deshmukhs* and the regime principally because they were denied access to capital—both in the form of land and machinery. The Congress regime granted them this and gained their support as a result.

(4) On the other hand the real heart of the Telengana movement was the struggle of the rural poor—peasants and labourers—for land and liberation from the oppression of the *deshmukhs* and their state.

(5) Telengana is in a sense unusual in that the initial spontaneous outbreaks of revolt were themselves directly related to the campaigning of the CPI through the Andhra Mahasabha after 1943. The initial steps of defiance were certainly prompted by the confidence gained during the campaign against the food levy.

(6) Thus the principal reason why Telengana became the most extensive peasant movement in Indian history was a 'subjective' one—the element of political intervention. A revolutionary fraction of the CPI was able to develop a movement which effectively combined the 'national' question and a radical agrarian movement,

which expelled the states and the *deshmukhs* from the countryside where at least proto-orgsaniations of popular power were established at village level and where a signifigant beginning was made towards land reform.

(7) Consequently the movement suffered from crucial flaws in the politics of even the revolutionary fraction of the CPI—which stemmed from a lack of an independent revolutionary tradition in India and the consequent reliance on the Popular Front politics of the deformed Communist International. This produced a policy of class alliances in the countryside, which subordinated the interests and self-activity of the rural poor to the 'rich peasants.'

(8) The attempt of the revolutionaries to use these politics to deal with the destruction of the organs of popular power after the Police Action led to a premature abandonment of mass struggle in favour of guerrilla squads in a mis-placed imitation of the Chinese experience. This gave the genuine class compromisers the chance to co-opt their base in the villages and create a situation where the mass base of the Telengana movement disintegrated during the 1950s.

(9) For the record, there is no evidence at all from any source whatsoever that caste played any role at all in the movement. On the contrary, all the too scanty evidence suggests that the old social relations began to disintegrate under the impact of the movement, not only in relation to caste but also women. As the movement was rolled back in the 1950s these old relations rose to the surface again, given added substance by the new-style factional politics.

For a movement of its scale Telengana has been the subject of comparatively little literature and even less analysis. Since I began to write this work as far as I can ascertain not another word has appeared in print. Yet Telengana is of great signifigance: firstly to the evaluation of agrarian movements in general, secondly as part of the history, the 'usable past', of the international workers' movement; and thirdly as a crucial part of the experience and tradition of the Indian working class.

Telengana as an Agrarian Movement

Telengana has frequently been a puzzle to the academic 'peasant studies' community because it defies the 'differentiation' approach. This relies on identifying the level of internal division inside the

peasantry—the emergence of a group of rich peasants with large holdings at the expense of the increased pauperisation of the mass of poor peasants. But as we have seen Telengana cannot be explained in terms of this approach. In fact one of the first major studies of peasant movements pointed out that Telengana had not sufferred more in this respect than many other areas of India, rather in several other areas where there were no movements it was worse [Barrington Moore 1973:381-382]. This proves to be an insuperable difficulty for the orthodox differentiation method because on these criteria the most developed agrarian revolt should not have occured in Telengana, or at least not there alone. Moore claimed that it could only have happened there because of a collapse of the authority of the Nizam's regime, but as we have seen this collapse was a result of the movement itself, not the other way around.

This is only really a problem if you have a mechanical statistical approach to agrarian movements, or indeed to any other social movement. Because it is now clear that the real question is not why Telengana, but why Nalgonda? The agrarian movement, the memory of which lingers in people's minds, was essentially confined to that one district and certain adjoining areas. It was certainly generated from their. If Telengana was not substantially worse off than the rest of India, then Nalgonda was not worse afflicted by landlordism than the rest of Telengana. No differentiation approach can solve this problem. From the evidence the explanation does appear to be that 'subjective' one, that a considerable number of the Nalgonda communists actually did believe in the possibility of a social revolution in a real rather than a rhetorical manner, and so approached the mass movement with a belief that it should be pressed forward. In the other areas the communists converted the movement into a vehicle for furthering the interest of the bourgeoisie and the 'national revolution', which, of course, was the national policy of the CPI. Why the Nalgonda communists should so singular possibly derives from the fact that a lot of the cadre came into politics with the Vandemataram movement, which was run by themselves, so they did not have the background of Gandhianism or CPI bureaucratic manipulation which was the usual experience of CPI activists. In any event they seized their golden opportunity with both hands in 1944-45.

This is not to totally dismiss differentiation as useless. Changing patterns of land ownership are extremely important and I have

used them in analysing the changes in Telengana after the movement. Even given the crucial question about the objective of production—personal consumption or the accumulation of capital—it is clear that the distribution of land is of considerable indicative value. However, it cannot by itself provide a satisfactory basis for explaining an agrarian movement because of the crucial role that is played by political intervention, as in the case of Telengana.

What I think does definitively collapse in the face of Telengana is the so-called 'middle peasant' theory, first formulated by Hamza Alavi in the Socialist Register [Alavi 1965]. Stripped to the bare bones, this holds that peasant movements depends on the middle peasants, as the poor peasants are generally too dependent on the rich peasants to provide independent leadership, at least in the initial stages of a movement. This was refined in another major study of peasant movements [Wolf 1971], in which another element was built into the theory: a paripheral location, which allowed the movement to develop beyond the effective control of the state. Part of the original formulation used the example of Telengana, although the account was hopelessly inaccurate (probably because of the lack of published accounts at the time of writing). This is a version of the breakdown of control theory—that it occurred in a backward (and therefore favourable) area and used broad slogans which drew in the middle peasants [Alavi 1965:28].

Now this theory has been extraordinarily influential in the peasant studies community. It has been so influential that dozens of research students from western universities have been sent scampering over Africa, Asia and South America looking for middle peasants with which to exptain practically every peasant movement in the book. Now the theory is more sophisticated than I have presented it in outline but its validity as a theoretical model is flawed because it excludes from analysis both 'rich peasants' and more importantly, the ruling class—especially the landlords, not to mention agricultural labourers, who as we have seen played a major role in the Telengana movement. In backward capitalism the class structure is much more complex than in metropolitan countries (although most of these have rather more complex structures than is generally supposed). This means that the ruling class oppresses a collection of other classes whose mutual interests were often antagonistic but were submerged under the domination of the landlords—in the case of Telengana, the *deshmukhs*.

So initially the Telengana movement was indeed a multi-class movement against the *deshmukhs*—multi-class in the sense that everyone else was involved. In that sense it was a necessary historical stage. This is not the same as saying that it should, as a point of principle, remain so. It is also true to say that, certainly in the initial stages, most of the leading cadres of the Andhra Mahasabha and the CPI came from 'rich' or 'middle' peasant families. It is also clear that the nature of the movement changed. The people who carried the movement from 1948 were the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, they were the people who were doing most of the fighting, and they were providing the leadership, along with declassed people from other peasant sections who were CPI cadres. The early movement had disregarded the interests of these people, even though they had been active from the start, but the other social groups either defected or became passive after 1948.

So the middle peasant analysis is founded on a basic misunderstanding of how movements occur. Who takes part in movements is determined by the overall class structure and by the nature and actions of the ruling class. A problem has been that much of class analysis has been mechanically based on Marx's analysis of British class society. Marx used Britain as the ultimate example of the motion of capital—in fact capitalist society usually produces a much more complex class structure than exists in Britain, even in the other major metropolitan countries (*e.g.*, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, USA). To conclude that a society is capitalist does not mean that you have to force an overwhelming majority of the population into the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. As we have established, there are other productive classes and they may well be involved in movements against the ruling class. So the presence of 'rich' or 'middle' peasants in such movements does not necessarily mean that poors peasants and labourers are incapable of taking independent action—it is a reflection of the general class relations of the society.

The rationale for then survival of intermediate productive classes, which under 'orthodox' Marxist analysis should have conveniently dissolved, is in essence simple. A recent article [Mann and Dickinson 1978] has provided an elegant Marxist analysis of this phenomenon, taking up a neglected differences between labour-time and production-time. The greater the difference between these two, the lower is the rate of return on capital and so less habitable is that branch of production for capital. In agriculture this difference is

often very great (*e.g.*, grain crips are simply left to grow for months on end) and so agriculture is often not at all attractive to capital. The gap can be filled by simple commodity producers, usually operating on a family basis, and otherwise as 'co-operatives'[21] These people do not work on the basis of profit in a capitalist sense, but, as we mentioned before, on the basis of maximizing aggregate revenue—*i.e.*, they will work long hours for comparatively little return. Since capital is dominant in these societies they can organize this sector by determining the terms of trade between agriculture and industry—the best example of this is the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Economic Community. This intervention of the state in organizing European agriculture is not different in nature from the intervention of the Indian state in agriculture—thus prompting the conclusion that the role of the agricultural sector in both is not essentially different.

A further argument is drawn that since only a small proportion of the agricultural process may be taken up with productive labour, then 'peasant' families who apparently only use wages-labour for a short period may in fact be using that to provide the majority of the productive labour-time necessary for their farm. The rest of the year their 'labour' may be unproductive, *e.g.*, cleaning machinery, maintainance, etc. Now this is of exceptional importance to India and to the Telengana experience. It could well mean that many 'rich' and 'middle' peasants were and are in reality totally dependent on wage-labour, even though they might only employ wage labour for a short period of time and appear to put in more family labour. This would help to explain the impact of the agricultural labourers strikes after the Police Action, and gives another twist to the arguments on the nature of the Indian economy—capitalist, feudal, semi-feudal, or 'colonial'—and therefore on political perspectives. This again makes reliance on land-holding statistics less reliable as a method of analysis.

One more point needs to be made in this context. The introduction of industrial crops destined for export to the metropolitan countries (*e.g.*, groundnuts, castor) is an example of how capital can regulate economies based on simple commodity production [see Bernstein 1977:62-64]. The kinds of intervention that he mentions

[21]The term 'co-operative' is confused because it is used to describe both associations of simple commodity producers, and associations of small capitalists.

the colonial state having to undertake: cultivation by-laws, land improvement schemes, credit and extension schemes, were undertaken in one form or another by the Hyderabad state government, and in general by the British administration in the rest of India. All of which leads to the conclusion that the economy if not itself consisting of capitalist relations of production was all least consciously organized by capital. In that case any attempt to force through a political perspective based on another analysis was bound to come into conflict with reality and suffer as a result thereof.

Telengana and the International Workers' Movement

What is most noticeable amongst the majority of communist parties of all descriptions and of most other 'socialist' parties all around the world is their practical (rather than rhetorical) lack of any sense of internationalism. There has not even been the semblance of a socialist international organisation (with the exception of the several 4th Internationals) since Stalin wound up the Comintern in 1943 and there is no great feeling that there is gap which should be filled, even if that might not be possible at the moment.

The Comintern, which had started off as the world workers, party for the achievement of international revolution, had long since degenerated into an instrument of Russian foreign policy. The concept of 'socialism in one country' came to be an ideal to be aimed for, and so removed any need for an international in the old sense. Parties do give 'support' to people in other countries, but only when it is in the interest of their own nation-state. Thus recent history is replete with examples of 'socialist' countries giving material aid to right-wing regimes suppressing workers and peasants and national liberation movements—for example, China in Ceylon and Bangladesh in 1971, Russia and China in Eritrea since 1978. Not only that, socialist and communist parties inside their own states have invariably given support to their own national ruling classes in international conflicts—for instance, the support of both the Labour and Communist Parties in Britain for immigrations controls, whatever arguments they might have with a particular measure. Those who still profess internationalism in reality pay it only in a mechanical lip-sense. International hero-worship (Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Guevara, Castro) rather than international solidarity is the order of the day.

A direct consequence of this is that there is a very low level of

knowledge of what was happening outside your own country. Great movements and events are known as leaders (Paris 1968, Vietnam, the Cuban revolution) rather than for their reality, with an honest accounting of their positive and negative aspects. In India, Telengana has acquired just such a status. It has been used by all kinds of people as a justification of their present political position. For others, the generation of 1967-68, it is a myth, India's Yenan that was betrayed, a model for what should be done now. Outside India it is hardly known at all, in common with the rest of the history of the Indian workers' movement the property of a tiny band of academic specialists.

Now this lack of history does not just apply to the Indian working class nor is it confined to any one country. What is true is that Telengana is an important part of the 'usable past' of the international workers' and socialist movement—because for a period of time the Telengana masses began to change the way in which they lived. Not only did they confront and defeat their state and their ruling class, they took over the organisation of production and a range of other administrative functions. The agricultural labourers took the confidence to demand that the revolution was theirs as much as anybody els's. Not only did they make the demand, but towards the end of the movement they also began to achieve it. The totally male image of politics was breached—women organized themselves as workers, took (some) leading roles, not simply as auxiliaries for men, and began to gain self-confidence and self-respect, instead of the humiliation, oppression and self- abnegation that the old regime generated and fostered. Now all of these positive developments were aborted by the liquidation of the movement, but the point is that all these people were not simply displaying an abstract heroism. In that short period of time, in a variety of incomplete and unsatisfactory ways, they achieved a number of positive things—perhaps for all them, women, peasants, workers, it was in the different ways that they achieved an independent social identity. They existed as real people and they believed it themselves.

This is something that is not often achieved and the fact that it did happen in Telengana, no matter how incomplete the manner of its accomplishment, is a matter of hope and enlightenment to workers all over the world.

A Note on Organisation

In fact the way the organisation of the movement developed suggests that what is considered to be the orthodox 'Leninist' model of a communist party may be incomplete. Traditionally it has been assumed that the communist party is the 'tribune of all the oppressed' and that it must organize all the other oppressed (other than proletarians, that is) directly. However, a recent biography of Lenin [Cliff 1975-79] clearly demonstrates that the Bolshevik party failed to organize in the rural areas and failed to gain a political following of any consequence. They were therefore perceived by the peasants as an exterior force, as a different type of tax-gathering regime when the Soviet state was faced by a severe food crisis during the Wars of Intervention. This caused the regime great problems, and the Bolsheviks' failure to deal with peasants resistance led to the New Economic Policy of 1921, which was in a large part a retreat before rural simple commodity production, which is the seed-bed of a capitalist class in the countryside.

The problem is that workers and 'peasants' occupy different places in production. Although oppressed, simple commodity producing 'peasants' can see a place for themselves within capitalism, which is in fact generalized commodity production. It appears to them for it to be possible to reform the system to do them 'justice', and the success of some of their numbers in becoming 'successful'—*i.e.*, capitalists seems to reinforce the point. In reality, they are habitually abused and oppressed by capital, which uses them to avoid capital having to participate in unprofitable branches of production (*i.e.*, the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC). Thus they are an eternally vacillating and unstable social class, and by themselves they have no peasant interest and objective in the overthrow of capitalism.

It is only the workers who, because of their position of being directly exploited by capital, possess the interest and capability to overthrow capital. Now it is these different interests which makes the large-scale recruitment of non-proletarian producers into communist parties fraught with danger. It is inherent in their nature that the non-proletarians attempt to draw the party towards them, which takes the form of radical reformism. The whole history of the CPI (and many other parties) is a good example of this process.

On the other hand, it is clear that it is often fatal for communist

parties to fail to gain political hegemony over these non-proletarian producers. A whole range of historical experience from the Russian Revolution onwards demonstrates this.[22] The problem then it is to identify the form of politics and organisation to get out of this dilemma. One obvious point is that the Kisan Sabhas as they have existed up to now are not it. The CPI and CPM have treated them and their demands like peasant trade unions. But these organisations cannot do this, as their members are not proletarians are not economically *exploited* by capital. They are oppressed (by taxation, CAP, etc.) and this dictates a *political* form of organisation. With workers, 'econonomic' struggle ultimately leads them into conflict with capital. With simple commodity producers, 'economic' struggle *ultimately* leads them into some accommodation with capital.

Now the point about the Andhra Mahasabha was that it was a *political* organisation. Starting with the campaign against cultural oppression, and moving on to the struggle against the state, it was never just a 'peasant trade union'. Not that 'economic' demands were not the solid base for the movement, but they became part of a developing general programme. This could only happen because revolutionaries of the CPI were organizing through the medium of the Andhra Mahasabha. On the other hand, the Andhra Mahasabha was never simply a section of the CPI—in fact, as we have seen, the danger that materialized was the opposite one, so that what was required was a sharper division between the membership of the Andhra Mahasabha and the CPI.

Now it is not claimed that the CPI/Andhra Mahasabha relationship represented in any way a refined and adjusted relationship. However, it was the most successful mobilisation of 'peasants' in the history of India, and it is the case that it was achieved through a 'parallel' organisation of (largely) non-proletarians, which did possess a revolutionary programme—the destruction of the Hyderabad state, and by extension, the rule of the *deshmukhs*.

These observations are drawn to suggest that further analysis of the Telengana experiences—and other experiences as well—along these lines would prove of value in determining the relationship between communist parties and non-proletarian oppressed producing classes.

[22]For instance, Hungary 1919, Bulgaria 1923, Portugal 1975.

Telengana and the Indian Workers' Movement

If the Telengana movement has an international significance then it is doubly so for the Indian working class. What is without doubt the greatest event in the history of the working-class and the oppressed of the sub-continent has been transformed into a totem-pole. 'Heroic Telengana'.

The over-riding experience of Telengana which has been resolutely ignored by the commentators has been the insanity of relying on multi-class alliences. Not an alliance of worker, 'peasants' and artisans, but an alliance which revolves around an alliance with the 'rich' peasants and the bourgeoisie. The CPI in Telengana was wedded to that throughout the movement and all of its successors remain devoted to it to this day. It is the argument of this study that it was a disaster then as is doubly so today, The irony is that it does not need a European socialist to point out this. CPI organizers recognized it at the time:

> . . . the rich peasants sections, who have very many close economic and social relations with many people in the village [are] going over to the enemy camp, they are actively working to supress our movement . . . [Sundarayya 1972:535].

In spite of this they clung dogmatically to their policy, with very dire effects on the people who were actively prosecuting the movement. The strategy of guerrilla warfare had a negative effect:

> It just showed the weakness of our approach. Without rousing the consciousness of the agricultural workers and making then fight for their demands, which they consider feasible and achievable, there was no use in making propaganda slogans; it only encouraged them to look to outsiders, the armed squads, to see it they could force the landlords, to concede the demands . . . They did not realise that they themselves had to actively participate, fight and win their demands. [Sundarayya 1972:510-511].

Neither did they need experts to tell them of the correct approach:

> . . . when we take up the just demands of farm servants, we cannot solve all the difficulties of the landed rich or of the landlords. they have to face certain difficulties and must be prepared to lose some of their easy habits or comforts. They cannot be maintain-

ed at the cost of the farm servants. We cannot nurse illusions about accommodating liberal-minded landlords or the rich peasants and sacrifice the interests of the agricultural labour.

. . . we must forge unity and solidarity between the day labourer and farm servants . . . In every labour ward, hamlet or area where agricultural labourers dwell together, we must organize them into groups and associations. This will enable our squads to meet them daily in small groups. We must also bring into the labour organisations the large number of young labourers and the cowherds. [Sundarayya 1972:512].

These perspectives are notable for the consistency with which they were ignored by the CPI then and since. Sundarayya quotes them without comment, which again illustrates the incapacity of even leading Indian communists to grapple with the reality of class struggles. But whenever it has come to the crunch the CPI and CPM have spurned workers and peasents in favour of the mirage of an alliance with one or other faction of the bourgeoisie.

I would further argue that the politics which suppress the self-activity of worker, and which defuse women moving to understand and combat their oppression, and which ignored the issue of caste, have common root—the politics of social unity a class collaboration. This is why the CPI and its successors have proved to be incapable of dealing with social reality. In a sense the strength and sophistication of bourgeois ideology which entraps them recalls the concept of hegemony, formulated by the Italian communist Antanio Gramsci. Certainly the way in which Indian communist politics have been almost totally absorbed into the bourgeois political structure ('legitimised' in the jargon of political science), and the lack of any challenge to social relations shows the success of the bourgeois ideology in achieving domination over these who have purported to to challenge the whole structure.

Yet for a time the peasants and workers of Telengana began to break this hold—their spontaneous movements for a time evoking a response from those militants organized in the local units of the CPI, who were at that time free from the politics of social unity. In doing this I would maintain that they did something which does not only provides an inspiration for the international workers' movement, but also raised part of communist politics to a new level, which has neither been properly recognized nor utilized. Only when

these militants began to retreat into the sterile wasteland of guerrilla warfare and 'national democracy', which involved upholding all manner of existing social relations, were they driven back and defeated. There have been many spontaneous revolts before and since. None has ever had the success of the Telengana movement of 1944-51. But that was the only time that there was a party of revolutionary socialists in India who were actually organizing to tear the guts out of Indian capitalism.

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Notes on Interviews

RAJ BAHADUR GOUR: Originally a member of the Comrades Association in Hyderabad city, shortly after joining the CPI he became the head of the party's trade union organisation, a position which he still held at the time of the interview (February 1974). A staunch supporter of main line CPI politics.

GIRI PRASAD: A member of a rich peasant family in Krishna district of coastal Andhra, who became involved with the CPI through a student group. Abandoning his plan to go to Cambridge to study law, in 1947 he volunteered for the squads and was eventually sent to the Palvancha forest region of Warangal district. After the party split he remained with the CPI.

S.V.K. PRASAD: Also from coastal Andhra, in 1943 he was sent to Hyderabad by the Provincial Committee to act as organizing secretary for the state committee. As he was not a state citizen, he had to work undercover for most of the time. After playing a leading role in the agrarian campaign he was arrested in 1948. In the 1950s he was the Warangal district secretary, but resigned after the State Committee abandoned the banchari campaign in 1961. In the party split he joined the CPM, but later left the party because of its parliamentarianism.

D.V. RAO: A student at the time of the Vandemataram incident, he became district secretary of the CPI in Nalgonda at the beginning of the Provincial Committee and co-authoring the 'Andhra Letter'. He also joined the CPM when the party split, but after 1968 left to join the Marxist-Leninist current, in which he was still active at the time of writing (September 1979).

RAVI NARAYAN REDDY: A member of a rich peasant family of Nalgonda district, he was drawn into nat ionalist politics during the Civil Disobediance Campaign of 1930-32, later joining both the Andhra Mahasabha and the State Congress, moving over to the CPI after the collapse of the State Congress after the 1938 *satyagraha*. He rapidly became the leading light of the Andhra Mahasabha, but after the movement began he was always one of those who put the emphasis on the national rather than the social nature of the movement. Arrested after the police action, he

became a leading figure in the move to get the movement called off. Remaining consistent to these politics, he was a prominent member of the right-wing of the CPI for the succeeding three decades.

BADDAM YELLA REDDY: From a rich peasant family in Karimnagar district, his political development mirrored that of Ravi Narayan Reddy. He was one of those who negotiatied with the government for calling of the movement while in jail, and after 1952 became a leading local member of the right tendency in the CPI. He died in 1976.

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